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LAURA BRIDGMAN

"Would'st know him now? Behold him,
The Cadmus of the Blind.
Giving the dumb lip language,
The idiot clay a mind."

WHITTIER.



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LAURA BRIDGMAN

DR. HOWE'S FAMOUS PUPIL

AND

WHAT HE TAUGHT HER

BY

MAUD HOWE

AND

FLORENCE HOWE HALL

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS BY
JOHN ELLIOTT

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1903

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PREFACE

IN the year 1846 Dr. Howe wrote to a friend, "I have in contemplation a work on Laura Bridgman. I had thought of writing to Messrs. Harper about its publication." Again, in his last report of the Perkins Institution, written in 1874, a little more than a year before his death, he says, speaking of Laura Bridgman: —

"I propose to give later a minute account of the instruction of this dear child and the condition into which it has brought her; but I must limit myself here to an expression of the thought and principle which gave me courage to begin and perseverance to finish the work."

This long-cherished purpose was never fulfilled. From the hour when the success of the method devised for Laura's instruction was made manifest, until the day of his death, nearly forty years later, Dr. Howe found no leisure season in which to put on record the most conspicuous achievement of his life. It is characteristic of the man that he never found time to tell the story of his hardest fought battle. Every year brought new causes for his championship, every day its active work for humanity. It is an irreparable loss that the story was never told as he alone could have told it.

On the death of Dr. Howe, his son-in-law and assistant, Mr. Michael Anagnos, succeeded him as director of the Perkins Institution for the Blind. Mr. Anagnos has carried on the work with love and loyalty until this day. Among the many legacies of trust, left by his predecessor, none has seemed to him more precious than that the story of Laura's education should be preserved as it is described in the reports, notes, and correspondence of Dr. Howe, the school journals, and Laura's own writings. At his request and with his assistance, two of Dr. Howe's daughters undertook this work.

If there be any measure of success in what they have attempted, it is due to the courageous spirit which has breathed from the faded ink of the dusty folios, the early letters and records, traced by their father's beloved hand; this spirit has animated them even as his ringing voice once roused them to whatever duty lay before them. If they have succeeded in portraying something of the simple strength of his nature, if they have been able to transfuse into their work the spirit of the man who sighed for obstacles to overcome, they have accomplished more than at the beginning of the work they dared to hope.

Thanks are due Mr. M. A. de Wolf Howe and Mr. I. R. Kent for help in revising the manuscript.

MAUD HOWE.
FLORENCE HOWE HALL.

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He asked not whence the fountains roll
No traveller's foot has found,
But mapped the desert of the soul
Untracked by sight or sound.

HOLMES.



LAURA BRIDGMAN

I

1831–1840

THE FIRST AMERICAN SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND, AND ITS FOUNDER

HE story of the education of LAURA BRIDGMAN is so closely bound up with that of Dr. Howe and with the history of the Perkins Institution for the Blind, that it would be difficult to tell of one intelligently without giving some account of the others.

Dr. SAMUEL GRIDLEY HOWE, when he became the teacher of Laura Bridgman, was a man already well known as a lover of liberty and a champion of the oppressed, but the records of this ardent life are not easily found. Dr. Howe kept no continuous journal, — perhaps because he was singularly without that self-consciousness which notes its own progress, but more than this he never rested long enough after a battle to describe its detail; the fight won, the next enemy of the public weal claimed his eager mind.

The story of his life from his childhood to the day when he entered the spare parlor of Daniel Bridgman's farmhouse illustrates this very well. The *Memoir* from

which the following extract is made was written by Mrs. Howe in 1876, the year of his death:—

"Samuel Gridley Howe was born in Pleasant Street, Boston, November 10, 1801. He was the third child of Joseph N. Howe and Patty Gridley. His father was a ship-owner and a manufacturer of ropes and cordage, which he furnished in large quantities, mostly on credit, to the United States government during the war of 1812. The failure of the government to acquit this indebtedness had much to do with the business reverses, which, at a later day, deprived Mr. Howe of the greater part of his property. Mrs. Howe was a relative of the engineer intrusted with the fortification of Bunker Hill on the night preceding the memorable battle. . . . Mrs. Howe was one of the beautiful women of her day, and was much esteemed for her kindness and benevolence. To her son she always remained an angel of goodness and of protection. . . .

"Samuel Howe was early a pupil at the Boston Latin School, of whose rough manners and discipline he always retained a vivid recollection. . . . [He] entered Brown University, at Providence, in the year 1818, and the seventeenth year of his age. . . .

"[After his graduation], in the year 1821, [he] returned to his native city, to devote himself to the study of medicine. Dr. Ingalls, Dr. Parkman, Dr. Jacob Bigelow, and Dr. John C. Warren were his principal instructors. He seems to have applied himself to this pursuit with ardor, and in due course of time was qualified to exercise the healing art, and admitted to the practice of medicine. . . . He was not destined, however, to swell the ranks of the practising physicians of Boston. The romance of his character was soon to call him in another

direction, leading him to delights and dangers congenial to his chivalrous nature.

"The Greek Revolution was now well begun, and the light of a national resurrection streamed across the wide continent and wider ocean, and set young America on fire with its blaze. A strong and generous impulse moved Dr. Howe to forsake the prospects opening to him in his own country, and to throw his youthful energies into the scale of the oppressed race, struggling single-handed against a wide-spread and powerful barbarism, which, up to that time, counted the states of Europe as its allies. The example of Lord Byron had given a high poetic sanction to the crusade of the philhellenes, and this, no doubt, had its weight with our young hero, who was a passionate admirer of the English bard. . . .

"Dr. Howe found in those about him little encouragement for an undertaking so new and unaccustomed. He used to mention Gilbert Stuart, the distinguished painter, with gratitude, as almost the only friend of those days who bade him God-speed on his errand of mercy. Strong, however, in his own conviction and intention, he embarked on board a brig bound for the Mediterranean, and, landing at Malta, took passage in an Austrian vessel to Napoli de Monembasia, in Peloponnesus. From this place he succeeded in pushing his way to the headquarters of the provincial government, assisted only by a letter of introduction from Edward Everett to a Greek acquaintance of his, formerly resident in Germany. . . .

"Dr. Howe was no holiday soldier. When he threw his fresh youth into the wavering scale of human freedom, he had counted the cost and foreseen the outlay. . . .

"The experience of those years of unceasing warfare, as briefly recounted from time to time by Dr. Howe, reminded one of Paul's synopsis of his years of trial:

'In journeyings often, in perils of robbers, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness.' In the beleaguered city, fiery death without the walls, famine and fever within. On the battlefield, with comrades falling around him. On the deck of the war-ship, amid the roar of cannon. On the march and beside the camp-fire, with the little Greek army, hunted from one fastness to another, poorly armed and worse provisioned, but undaunted and indomitable. Like the rest, he fed poorly, or fasted. Like them, he slept upon the ground. But their fight was his fight, only because it was the fight of humanity. . . .

"After six years spent among the vicissitudes of war, it became evident to Dr. Howe that the Greeks would be overcome by starvation, unless prompt relief could be at once afforded them. To obtain this, he returned to America, and began, as he used to say, to preach a crusade in their favor. Though never especially given to oratory, he must have carried into this mission the eloquence of zeal and conviction. His fervid pleadings awoke a generous response in the hearts of his countrymen. The purse-strings of wealthy citizens were unloosed. Ladies contributed their spare garments, and children their toys, to swell the tribute of the new civilization to the old. The sum collected . . . amounted to some sixty thousand dollars, — a sum representing a much greater value in those days than in these. A great amount of clothing was also contributed. Dr. Howe invested the greater part of the money obtained in provisions, of which the progress of the war had made the Greeks nearly destitute. The constant demand made upon the able-bodied men of the country for military service had left but a small remnant to fulfil the offices of commerce and agriculture, and the perpetual wasting

of fire and sword made even the labors of these few unavailing. The aid brought from America was most carefully distributed by Dr. Howe. . . .

"A great number of Greek families having taken refuge in and near Ægina, Dr. Howe established at that place a main depot for the distribution of clothing and provisions. As all these people were without work, he commenced the building of a mole, whose construction gave occupation to a great number of men, women, and children. . . . The quay, a beautiful one, is still standing, and is called the American Mole.

"Somewhat later, Dr. Howe applied to the Greek government for the grant of a large tract of land upon the Isthmus of Corinth, where he proposed to establish a colony of exiles. The land was given him, and the first cottages were soon built. He says of this undertaking: 'The government granted ten thousand *stremmata* of land, to be free from taxes for five years; but they could not give me much practical help. I was obliged to do everything, and had only the supplies sent out by the American committee to aid me. The colonists, however, coöperated, and everything went on finely. We got cattle and tools, ploughed and prepared the earth, got up a school-house and a church. In one of my journeyings, I found a sick straggler, — a deserter, probably, from the French army, — who was by trade a wheelwright. After curing him, I got him to build a cart, and it was such a marvel that the peasantry flocked from all the neighboring districts to see it, having never seen a wheeled vehicle before.'

"Dr. Howe published, in 1828, a work entitled *A History of the Greek Revolution.* This book, though rarely met with in these days, was received with much interest at that time. It is valuable to-day as a concise and

graphic narrative of events, in some of which the historian had a part, and of all of which he possessed the knowledge of one near to the scene of action. . . .

"Dr. Howe now returned [1831] to his native country, to find there a new object of interest, destined to claim the longest and most continuous service of his life. A friend of his, Dr. John D. Fisher, of Boston, had recently returned from Paris much impressed with the education of the blind as pursued in that city in the school, which had been founded by Valentin Haüy. . . .

"This was the first school ever established for that purpose."

Dr. Fisher came back to Boston with the hope that a school for the blind might be established there, and three years later he called a meeting at the Exchange Coffee-house of those persons likely to be interested in furthering the plan. Many members of the house of representatives were present, and some of Boston's most public-spirited citizens. To this company, Dr. Fisher gave a vivid description of the school at Paris. A committee was formed, and it was resolved to carry the matter before the legislature. Before this body Dr. Fisher again told his story.

The first act of the committee was to appeal to the legislature for articles of incorporation, which were unanimously granted by both houses without debate. After this fair start, the good work languished. The committee held several meetings, and elected officers, but nothing practical was accomplished until one day, when Dr. Fisher and two members of the committee were walking along Boylston Street in Boston, they met

Dr. Howe, just returned from Greece. He was then thirty years old, called "the handsomest man of his day," with his chivalrous youth, his romantic past, and, his friends believed, a brilliant future before him.

"Here is Howe," said Dr. Fisher to his companions; "the very man we have been looking for all this time."

Dr. Fisher was not mistaken in hailing his friend as the man for whom the new enterprise had been waiting. From the day when he accepted the proposal made to him by the committee, his energy and genius were devoted to the cause of the weakest of the human race. As he had fought with the Greeks in their struggle for national existence, he now fought for the unfortunates, and from that hour he made his own the cause of the blind, the deaf, the idiot, the insane, the convict, and the slave.

Dr. Howe's first step was to return to Europe in order to investigate the various institutions for the blind already established. We learn from the *Memoir* and his journal that even when on that mission of peace he could not keep out of the exciting political agitations, which were then convulsing Europe.

In January, 1832, he wrote to the committee requesting from one to three months' time for matters of private interest. This was granted; but the "matters of private interest" proved to be the carrying of funds and supplies to the disheartened Poles, then in the midst of their great struggle for freedom, and a visit to the colony at Corinth. This incident strikes the

key-note of his nature, from first to last: the cause of the oppressed, the cause of the afflicted were "the matters of private interest" of his life.

The *Memoir* goes on to say: —

"Our hero, already accustomed to bear a part in the battles of freedom, soon found himself upon the field of the revolution which brought Louis Philippe of Orléans to the throne of France. . . .

"The Polish nation were at this time in revolt against their Russian masters, and the friends of freedom throughout the world regarded their struggle for independence with great interest. Considerable supplies of money and clothing were sent from America for their benefit. These contributions were assigned to General Lafayette, in Paris, to be employed as he should see fit. More than one fruitless effort had been made to send the needed aid across the Prussian frontier, within which a large body of the insurgents, driven over their own border, had taken refuge, holding at bay a *cordon* of Prussian soldiers, by whom they had been treacherously surrounded.

"Dr. Howe was at this time about to visit Berlin, in order to inspect the school for the blind founded in that city by Valentin Haüy, some twenty-five years earlier. At the request of General Lafayette, he became the bearer of gifts of American sympathy to those who were sorely in need of such assistance. Having accomplished this mission, which, for a time, revived the sinking hearts of the brave patriots, he proceeded to Berlin, where he was arrested at his hotel on the very night of his arrival. . . .

"He was subjected to rigorous confinement, interrupted only by vexatious and oft-repeated interrogations. He spoke in after years, though rarely, of his dark and dis-

mal dungeon, whose dreariness and discomfort were extreme. . . .

"The fact of his arrest and confinement was, nevertheless, a secret, and might long have remained so but for a fortunate accident. Dr. Howe, on the day of his arrival in Berlin, had met a friend from America. This was none other than Albert Brisbane, the well-known disciple of Fourier. This gentleman, calling the next day at the hotel named on Dr. Howe's card, could find no traces of him. It was denied that any American had been there; but Mr. Brisbane, learning the visit of the police on the previous night, became suspicious of foul play, and wrote at once to the American minister at Paris, Hon. William C. Rives. The case was immediately investigated, and a requisition was made upon the Prussian government for the person of an American citizen, unjustly detained. After repeated denials on the one hand, and a creditable persistence on the other, the point was yielded, and Dr. Howe regained his liberty, but not until he had made a journey of six hundred miles, in a carriage with two *gendarmes*, who released him just outside the Prussian frontier, with an admonition never to cross it again. . . ."

On his return to Boston in July, 1832, Dr. Howe received a few blind children at his father's house, No. 140 Pleasant Street, and the New England Institution for the Education of the Blind became a living fact.

Like Valentin Haüy, Dr. Howe found his first pupils in the streets. In his last Report for 1874, he tells the story of his meeting them: —

"In the year 1832, while inquiring for blind children suitable for instruction in our projected school, I heard

of a family in Andover in which there were several such, and immediately drove out thither with my friend and co-worker, Dr. John D. Fisher. As we approached the toll-house, and halted to pay the toll, I saw by the road-side two pretty little girls, one about six, the other about eight years old, tidily dressed, and standing hand in hand hard by the toll-house. On looking more closely I saw that they were both totally blind. . . .

"They were shy of us at first; but we gained their confidence with some difficulty; after which they led the way to their home in a neighboring farm-house. They were two of a numerous family, the parents of which were substantial, respectable people, and particularly good samples of the farming class of New England. The mother was especially intelligent, and devoted to her children. . . . She was much interested in the novel plan for educating the blind, which we explained to her, . . . and being satisfied about our honesty, she consented with joy and hope to our proposition of beginning with her two girls, Abby and Sophia Carter. In a few days they were brought to Boston, and received into my father's house, as the first pupils of the first American school for the blind."

The incidents of the first months of toil and success are told in Dr. Howe's article published in 1833, in the *New England Magazine*: —

". . . The infant institution crept on all fours for six months, entirely unknown to the public. In January, 1833, the trustees found that they had expended all their funds, and were several hundred dollars in debt. . . .

"They then prepared to exhibit to the public the result of the six months' instruction upon the children, — confident that they would plead for their blind brethren

in irresistible language. Accordingly Dr. Howe gave an exhibition of the pupils before the legislature, which made such a powerful impression as to induce the two houses to vote, almost by acclamation, the sum of six thousand dollars per annum to the institution, on the condition that it should educate and support twenty poor blind from the state gratuitously.

"This exhibition was followed up by others made before the public in Salem, and in Boston, which excited great interest. . . . The ladies of Salem first suggested the idea of a fair; and assisted by those of Marblehead and Newburyport, they got up a splendid fête, which resulted in a net profit of $2,980.

"Resolving not to be outdone, the ladies of Boston entered the field with great ardor, and persevering for several weeks, they opened a bazaar on the first of May in Faneuil Hall. . . . The net profits of this fair amounted to $11,400.

"The institution had now taken firm hold upon the sympathies of a generous public, and it needed only something to call forth and direct its expression: this was done by the splendid donation of Thomas H. Perkins, of his mansion-house and ground in Pearl street to the institution, for a permanent location. We call this a donation, for it was so; Mr. Perkins qualified it with the condition that fifty thousand dollars should be raised."

As Dr. Howe was secretary of the board, all the Reports of the institution, whether signed by himself or the trustees, were written by him.

Such literature is usually dry reading. The carefully prepared report of a public institution is glanced at by a few conscientious people, but for the most part it goes to light the fire. Dr. Howe's Reports, now unfortu-

nately out of print, read like so many chapters of an impassioned romance, himself the all-unconscious hero. They were awaited with impatience and eagerly read by thinkers and students on both sides of the Atlantic. The originality of his theories and methods of education startled the pedagogues of his time; their soundness is proved by the fact that they are to-day accepted as necessarily integral parts of the modern educational system.

Nothing is so striking in this earliest expression of his views on the education of the blind, as the protest he makes against their being treated as a necessarily dependent or pauper class, as was, and still is, the case in the best of the European establishments. The very corner-stone of the new school was the independence of the blind.

Dr. Howe's first Report shows the grasp which a year's study had given him.[1]

"Blindness has been in all ages," he says, "one of those instruments by which a mysterious Providence has chosen to afflict man; or rather it has not seen fit to extend the blessing of sight to every member of the human family. In every country there exists a large number of human beings, who are prevented by want of sight from engaging with advantage in the pursuits of life, and who are thrown upon the charity of their more favored fellows. . . .

"Society . . . would hardly credit the assertion that there are more than *eight thousand blind persons in these United States*, yet such is undoubtedly the case.

"The public must be ignorant of this fact; to suppose

[1] Notes, page 369.

it is not so, and yet that it had done nothing for so large a class of the afflicted, would be an impeachment of its charity and its justice; and the trustees appeal to it in the full confidence that the ready answer will be, 'What can be done for them?' . . .

"Much can be done for them; . . . you may give [the blind man] the means of becoming an enlightened, happy, and useful member of society; you may give him and his fellow-blind the means of earning their own livelihood, or at least of doing much towards it; you may light the lamp of knowledge within them, you may enable them to read the Scriptures themselves, —

> "And thus, upon the eye-balls of the blind,
> To pour celestial day."

". . . This is not a common call, nor is it a common case; for the object proposed differs materially from most charitable establishments; first, in that there is no possibility of deception, since no one can doubt or deny the claim which the blind have upon the charity of their more fortunate fellows; and second, that the object is an economical one to the community. It is to take from society so many *dead weights* that it is proposed to educate the blind, and enable them to get their own livelihood; and society ought to consider any capital so invested as a *sinking fund* for the redemption of its charitable debt; as a provision for preventing the blind from becoming taxes to the community. . . .

"I would observe that sufficient attention is not paid to the personal demeanor of the blind, either by their parents or in the public institutions of Europe. They contract disagreeable habits, either in posture or in movement; they swing their hands, or work their heads, or reel their bodies; and seem in this way to occupy

those moments of void which seeing persons pass in listlessly gazing about them.

"They are apt also to be exceedingly awkward and embarrassed in company, and are often very bashful while very vain; all this can be corrected by pursuing the same means as used with seeing children, and by accustoming them to society.

"Blind persons can become as well qualified as seeing persons for many employments, which are generally thought beyond their powers: they can teach languages, history, geography, mathematics, and many other sciences perfectly well; I know not why they should not make first-rate counsellors, and think it possible that they might fill the pulpit both ably and usefully. . . .

"There is a great error prevalent among those who have friends or relations deprived of their sight, and who imagine that too much kindness, or too much attention cannot be lavished upon them. This is entirely a mistake, and it is quite certain that the greatest obstacle to the education of the blind children who are received into the European institutions is, that their previous treatment has been such as to prevent the development of their remaining senses."

The early letter-books of the institution are full of letters concerning blind children whose parents were too poor to pay for their instruction. These letters are in the handwriting of the director, who refers to himself as "head teacher, clerk, director, secretary, etc."

We find many fervent appeals to the governors and secretaries of the states, laying before them the claims to an education of such and such a poor child discovered

in their midst; others are addressed to private citizens urging them to make exertions for the blind children in their towns. Even the letters treating of the details of the children's wardrobes are full of the earnestness which was the real secret of the success, which attended all Dr. Howe's efforts; it was the key that opened the tightly locked coffers of many a New England town.

An example is this letter to the selectmen of the town of O——:

Dec. 8, 1834.

GENTLEMEN, — I am requested by the mother of Caroline Higgins, to write you in behalf of her daughter, one of the pupils at this institution. She represents herself to be, and I believe is, really unable to provide clothing for her daughter, and solicits your aid. Caroline is in want of winter garments, and ought to be supplied at once. She is an excellent girl, a good scholar, and making such proficiency in music as will enable her some day to provide for herself. It behooves you, therefore, as a matter of economy for your town, to prevent her coming upon you as a pauper, which she must do unless educated, and enabled to do something for her livelihood. But above all, as a matter of humanity and religious duty, let her wants be supplied. God in his wisdom has seen fit to throw her upon the charity of others, but he has also pointed out a way by which she can become an intelligent, a happy, and a useful member of the community, and the responsibility of her becoming so, or remaining in intellectual as well as physical darkness, remains with those others. She, poor girl, is doing her part well, and has gained the esteem and affection of those about her.

I earnestly entreat you to attend to her pressing wants, and that as soon as possible.

I remain truly yours,

SAMUEL G. HOWE, *Director.*

The journals kept during these early years of the institution give interesting glimpses of the new experiments tried, of the conduct and character of the scholars, the teachers, and the visitors. These journals, as well as the early letter-books, are in Dr. Howe's handwriting.

In all the details of school and household we feel the ardent nature of the director. One of the traits, which characterized him through life, was the power of inspiring his attendants, teachers, clerks, scholars, domestics, indeed every person with whom he came into relation, with something of his own indomitable spirit. He energized the atmosphere about him so that no one breathing the same air could long remain inert or indolent.

His day began at five o'clock, winter and summer, and ended shortly before midnight, for he needed little sleep, and was in the habit of despatching all his correspondence before breakfast.

In reading the many letters written at intervals of a few months to the parents or guardians of his pupils, one is impressed with the love and interest felt in each child by Dr. Howe. There was room in his heart for every one of them. He studied the intellect and the character of each child to find out its talents

and needs, and we find as great a variety in his treatment of the different children as the variety of their natures and their antecedents demanded.

From the earliest days it was one of his principles to teach the scholars to look upon themselves as active citizens of the commonwealth, and in every way to keep them in relation with the events and questions of the day.

The monastic idea of withdrawing the inmates of schools and institutions from the events of the outer world, and interesting them solely in the small sphere of the school, was much more prevalent then than now.

This false idea Dr. Howe combated all his life. We find the pupils celebrating the national holidays with patriotic speeches, and discussing political affairs with all the ardor and intolerance of youth. In this as in many other things we recognize how much in advance of his time he was. Some of the older reports read like prophecies of a later day.

In writing of this period, Mr. Anagnos says: —

"The school being now well established, and in a condition of vigorous growth, Dr. Howe began to devote himself to the study and improvement of the means and appliances for teaching the blind. By his own exertions he raised subscriptions for a printing fund; and, after many and costly experiments with the ordinary printing-press, a new one, especially adapted to the work of embossing books for the blind, was obtained at considerable expense. A series of experiments, made by the doctor

in arranging an alphabet legible to the touch, resulted in the adoption of a slight modification of the ordinary Roman letter of the lower case; and this has been known as the Boston type. This was the first printing-office for the blind opened in any American institution; and its work was so actively carried on that very flattering testimonials of its worth were soon received in the shape of orders from England, Ireland, and Holland. The British and Foreign Bible society ordered a complete edition of the Book of Psalms, for which they paid seven hundred and fifty dollars. The exertions of Dr. Howe to establish a printing-fund for the blind on a solid and permanent basis were incessant and unwearied, in season and out of season. For this end he visited Washington with three of his pupils, whose attainments he exhibited to the members of congress, hoping to induce them to found a national printing establishment for the blind."

Dr. Howe says in a letter to Mr. Sneider, written in 1834: —

"I abandoned the idea of printing by plates nearly two years ago: a large impression was struck off in 1832 by me, merely to show the principle, and published in a pamphlet. I shall commence printing soon, and I trust you will agree with me that movable types are better on every account, and that one not unimportant advantage will be that the printing may be done by the blind themselves."

The printing referred to by Dr. Howe was the first printing for the blind ever done in America.[1]

The experiments so laboriously carried out in the house in Pleasant Street without money, without

[1] Notes, page 369.

proper appliances, were wonderfully successful, and the results of the patient ingenuity of the director are set forth by him in the second Report to the corporation, that of 1834: —

"We are most happy also to state that the experience gained during the last year is likely to be turned to the benefit of the blind in general, by improvements devised in the maps and books. The director has been engaged in a series of experiments upon making maps for the blind, which has resulted in the contrivance of means of embossing, which will be much better than those used in any of the European institutions, and which can be multiplied at a very cheap rate. A set of maps will soon be finished, forming an atlas for the blind, superior to anything of the kind yet made public.

"Considerable attention has been paid also to the subject of printing in raised characters, and it is found that books may be printed for the blind, which are superior in every respect to any that can be had from Europe, and which will be much cheaper.

"The institution is now provided with a printing-press, and the whole of the book of the Acts of the Apostles has been printed.

"This desirable acquisition has been obtained without encroaching upon the funds, by means of contributions raised by the director among the charitable communities of Nantucket and New Bedford. As the institution is now in possession of a press, and a complete set of types, it will be able to go on printing books at a comparatively small expense, and may in a short time have a better library for the blind than any one now in existence."

The printing fund also received, besides the help of the Massachusetts and American Bible societies, contributions from private individuals and from the American Tract society. The latter association furnished funds for printing *The Dairy Man's Daughter*, which was distributed gratis among the blind scholars and correspondents of the institution, and, as we learn from a letter of the doctor's, was received and read with great pleasure.

Mrs. Sigourney, the writer, was one of the earliest friends of the institution. She was instrumental in sending Charles Sanford, a poor blind lad from the Hartford almshouse, to the school in Boston, and while he continued there was responsible for his clothing.

Charles was the subject of a correspondence between Dr. Howe and Mrs. Sigourney — between the leading poetess and the chief philanthropist of seventy years ago — a time when there still were females, poetesses, and authoresses in the world.

BOSTON, MASS. Sept. 12, 1835.

MRS. SIGOURNEY:

Dear Madame, — Yours of the 23rd ult. was duly received. It is fortunate indeed for poor Charles that he has fallen under your notice. The undiminished interest you show in his welfare argues as much of good to him as reflects credit upon yourself.

His doom would inevitably have been to pass his days in an almshouse and probably to sink in early idiocy, if he had not been removed from the situation in which you found him. . . . Hence the ease with which they [the blind] are taught; hence all the success which has attended our

efforts here with the very imperfect means furnished us. . . . Charles is improving somewhat and I hope when we return to the city, and are enabled to enforce the requisite discipline in our workshops, that he will begin to learn some kind of manual work which will enable him to keep himself out of the almshouse. His clothing can be supplied here as cheaply perhaps as with you, and I should think from Mrs. Smith's account they might be furnished for about $10 or $12. I will either send you his measure, however, or get them made here as you direct. I regret exceedingly that I did not know you were in Boston a few weeks ago; I should certainly have given myself the pleasure of calling upon you, and it would have been gratifying to you, I know, to have seen and conversed with some of our pupils, who begin already to show in the variety and depth of their acquirement with how feeble means the mind of the blind may be enlightened. I hope that when you have again the intention of visiting Boston, you will let me know it, that I may have the pleasure of personally testifying the respectful esteem, with which I am truly yours,

S. G. Howe.

Mrs. Sigourney writes to Dr. Howe, under the date of November 20, 1835:—

I feel an inclination to write you a few lines, by the return of your pupils, James Spencer and John Brady, though I have little else to say but to express my pleasure at the intelligence and happiness they exhibit, and to congratulate you on the power you possess of developing intellect and elevating character. I was particularly struck with their proficiency in musick and their gentlemanly deportment. I cannot have any such anticipations for poor little Charles, inasmuch as you are not able to supply the

deficiencies of nature. I have written him a few lines that he may know there is one human being interested in his improvement. I should like to know if he is comfortably provided for, and also to be kept apprised of his wants. Be so good as to thank your matron for her kindness in attending to his wardrobe. I was quite disappointed at not being able to visit your institution when in Boston this summer, and also, at not seeing you when you passed thro' town last week. With sincere wishes for the Divine blessing on our benevolent efforts, I remain yours,

Very respectfully,

L. H. SIGOURNEY.

The impression of power produced by reading the rusty volume of faded letters from which the foregoing are taken is difficult to describe. The same vigorous personality speaks in every letter; concerning the many subjects of which they treat the same earnestness is displayed. We find fervent appeals to public-spirited citizens, to rich associations, for the cause of the blind of all the civilized world. We find letters to clergymen in Portland and other cities, asking their assistance in arranging for exhibitions of his pupils in their towns.

Dr. Howe takes his scholars before the legislatures of the New England states, he carries them to New York, to Philadelphia, to Washington. Wherever he goes he touches the public and the private conscience. He never imagines failure possible; his was the faith which moves mountains.

During the summer of 1836, it was found necessary to make extensive repairs and additions to the Pearl

Street house; in order that these alterations might be more easily made, the school was transported to Cohasset, where for six months the children enjoyed a country life, and throve on the bracing sea-air.

On their return to the greatly improved institution, it seems to have occurred to the director, that the heart of a city might not be the best place in which to establish a rapidly increasing school. The advantages of a suburban situation had been proved by the Cohasset experiment, and Dr. Howe cast about him to find a way to establish his school in some retired and peaceful neighborhood.

One of the conditions of Colonel Perkins' gift, however, had been that the school should be held in perpetuity in the Pearl Street mansion, and it was deemed a most important matter to keep the school before the eyes of the public, upon whose interest and benevolence its very existence seemed to depend. The proposed plan of a change of location was considered only to be dismissed.

A year later it was not so easily put aside. The ill effects of keeping the boys and girls under the same roof grew more and more apparent. The house was not large enough for a suitable separation of the two sexes, and in spite of the vigilance of teachers and director, the elder pupils were full of romantic methods of communicating with each other.

The offspring of marriages between congenital defectives almost invariably perpetuate the taint in the blood of the parents. In the early days of his relation

with the blind, Dr. Howe strongly disapproved of the marriage of any congenitally blind person, even to a seeing person. In later years his views on this point were slightly modified, and he took much pleasure in the happy domestic lives of certain of his favorite pupils who had espoused seeing people; marriage between two blind persons he always denounced as against every law of morality. The justness of this view is too evident to need demonstration.

It was the advisability of a more complete separation of the blind girls and boys than was possible at the Pearl Street school, which, more than any other consideration, induced Dr. Howe to put aside all the objections to such a change, and to urge upon the trustees the exchange of the Pearl Street estate for the building and grounds, which up to the present day the institution has occupied. In his report for the year 1839 Dr. Howe says: —

"The most important act on our part has been the exchange of the estate on Pearl Street for the spacious and beautifully located edifice known as the Mount Washington House, South Boston."

The Mount Washington House was a large hotel situated on the high ground of that peninsula, which at one time seemed destined to become the fashionable part of Boston. But fashion, or land speculators, decreed differently, and turning its back upon the beautiful suburb, fashionable Boston marched across the flats of the Back Bay, making its land of refuse and borrowed soil, and building its great churches on such

insecure foundations that the noblest of them still lacks its towers, and the most graceful spire is already leaning far out of the perpendicular.

To-day the children of the richer class breathe the heavy air of the river, and South Boston is given over to the very poor and to the defectives. It is an adjusting of averages, after all; for these sons and daughters of the city have no houses at Nahant or Beverly to which they may retreat with every May day.

The exchange of location was approved by all the friends of the school; Dr. Howe and his scholars left Pearl Street, and took possession of the great hotel, where in the year 1837 a certain little Miss Julia Ward of New York had made a short stay.

Dr. Howe's school journal for 1839 and 1840 gives an account of the new *habitat* of the institution at South Boston. After the cramped quarters of the Pearl Street house, the large rooms of the old hotel were much enjoyed. The building stands on high ground, and commands a view of the harbor and the bay, which, curiously enough, is a source of much pride to its inmates.

It happens not infrequently that visitors wishing to see the fine view are shown up to the roof by one of the blind scholars, who points out the direction in which the various objects of interest lie: "Here is Fort Independence; there you can see Fort Warren and Deer Island; the steamers for Europe pass in this direction, and the Nahant boat in that."

There is a certain romance clinging to all that con-

cerns the early life of the institution, which those who have known it either by experience or tradition recognize. The romantic, ardent character of the director dominated every teacher, every scholar, every domestic. The school was never a pedagogic retreat; it was a channel through which poured a stream of the world's life-current. Its visitors included the best people of Boston, and the most intelligent of the European travellers.

The institution was one of the nerve centres of the body intellectual of that smaller Boston of the thirties. It was brought successively into touch with Greece, with Poland, with Italy, and later with Crete and Santo Domingo, through the sympathy and interest of its director.

In the pleasant, high-ceiled apartments of the director (always spoken of as "the doctor's part") what important meetings, what earnest discussions have taken place! Here Dorothea Dix came to ask advice in her crusade in aid of the insane; here Horace Mann discussed the questions of public education. Charles Sumner spent many a night here talking on the burning subjects of slavery and secession. Theodore Parker's voice rang through these rooms "like a hammer which breaketh the rocks" of superstition and formality. Charles Dickens passed hours here, and carried away impressions which he never lost.

There are few, whether humble or great, who have lived in the old building who do not remember its hospitality with gratitude. It was built for a public

hostelry where men and women might find food and shelter if they could pay for it. Fate reserved it for a better hospitality. Many scores of travellers have passed months and years in its healthy atmosphere, and have left it richer a hundred-fold in heart and in mind than when they entered it.

II

1829-1837

DANIEL AND HARMONY BRIDGMAN — INFANCY OF LAURA BRIDGMAN — THE FIRST FRIEND — DR. HOWE'S MEETING WITH LAURA

IN the town of Hanover, New Hampshire, on the 21st day of December, 1829, a third daughter was born to Daniel and Harmony Bridgman. Daniel Bridgman is described as an intelligent man, a substantial farmer, and a pillar of the Baptist church; his wife Harmony as a person of intelligence and considerable natural ability.

The Bridgmans lived the life of the New England farmers of that day; not an easy existence, but a healthy, energetic one. Their house was pleasantly situated in the midst of a farming district. It had a large, comfortable kitchen, which served as the living-room of the family as well. The "spare parlor" where the couple were married, and where for thirty years the family marriages and funerals took place, was, in accordance with the New England custom of that day, rarely opened save on these solemn occasions.

Laura Dewey Bridgman came of what we call good old New England stock. Her earliest maternal ancestor in this country came from Salisbury, England, to

Massachusetts, and settled in Newbury some time prior to the 9th of July, 1660.

Joseph Downer, grandfather of Harmony Downer, was a person who played some part in the world. He was one of the five men who are remembered as the first settlers of Thetford, Vermont. In the year 1761, he with four others broke the ground for their rude camp upon the west bank of the Connecticut River.

In New England, towns grew in those days at something very like the rate of speed at which they grow to-day in the state of Washington. Though we find sharp contrasts between the manners of the early settlers of New England and those of their descendants, the settlers of the West to-day, the unlikeness is more apparent than real. The same qualities of hardihood, courage, independence are to be found in both.

Descendants of Joseph Downer are now living in Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, and California. Without doubt if we could but trace them, we should find them in Oklahoma and the Yukon. The colonizing instinct is in their blood; the spirit that led the first Downer from Salisbury to Massachusetts led his descendants from New Hampshire to California.

Before leaving his native town of Newbury for Vermont, Joseph Downer married Mary Knight. Seven years after the five settlers built their camp-fire on the banks of the Connecticut, the first town-meeting was held. On this occasion it was decided "to hire preaching with the town of Lynne."

In 1773, five years later, "the first settled minister

was hired, and a church was organized with thirty-nine members, among whom was Mary Knight Downer" — helpmate of our sturdy Joseph, who seems to have left the spiritual affairs of the family in the hands of his wife.

It may have been that at the time when the Reverend Clement Sumners, the "hired minister," was holding the earliest church services for the benefit of Mary Downer and the other thirty-eight pious souls, our good Joseph was away from home fighting with powder and shot, rather than with prayer and exhortation. He left the ploughshare for the sword and fought for the good cause, gaining some credit to himself, which his descendants are proud to claim for him. The hands that were strong to drive the plough through the harsh soil of New England were strong to protect that land, which patient toil had made a home.

The figures of Joseph Downer, the stout revolutionary soldier, and of Mary Knight, his pious wife, loom through the distance of years as very important factors in the sum of their great-grandchild Laura Bridgman's character. We shall find something of the indomitable patience of the one, and of the religious aspirations of the other, in their descendant of the third generation. Their eldest son, Cushman Downer, took to wife Hannah Gerry, and to this couple were born seven children, the youngest of whom, Harmony, married Daniel Bridgman.

Of Daniel Bridgman one of his children writes: "Father, though quiet and reserved with strangers, was

a man of strong intellect and ability; he was noted for his superior judgment and shrewdness in making a sharp trade. He served two sessions in the New Hampshire legislature."

To this couple was born a daughter who was destined to make their name a household word on both continents.

In an article published in *Barnard's American Journal of Education*, Dr. Howe thus describes Laura's early years: —

"The child inherited most of the physical peculiarities of the mother, with a dash of what, from want of a better name, is called the scrofulous temperament. This temperament makes one very liable to certain diseases, but it gives great delicacy of fibre, and consequent sensibility. Laura had a physical organization like that of a delicate plant, — very liable to derangement, because very sensitive; also, very difficult as an organization to bring to maturity, but promising great capacity and beauty.

"During infancy she was puny and rickety. She was subject to disturbances of the nervous system, the outward symptoms of which some persons call 'fits,' and think they explain the whole matter by that name. These disturbances, or fits, usually cause permanent injury to the brain, which shows itself in feebleness of certain mental faculties, in imbecility, or total idiocy. They should always be regarded and treated as symptoms of grave character, and liable to affect the whole future bodily and mental character, even when the apparent proximate cause is 'teething,' or a derangement of the digestive organs.

"In Laura's case these fits recurred, at various intervals, until she was about a year and a half old. During that period, therefore, she lost the healthy growth and development which should have been going on. . . .

"At about twenty months old, she became apparently well, and continued so for four months. During this period all her senses seemed to be in a normal condition; and she showed more intelligence than one would expect, in view of her previous condition.

"She sickened again at two years old. The scarlet fever ravaged her system with great fury, destroying utterly the organs of sight and hearing, blunting the sense of smell, and prostrating her whole system so completely that recovery seemed impossible. She was kept in bed, in a darkened room, for about five months, and was ill and feeble for two years.

"The storm of disease gradually abated, however, and the wreck at last floated peacefully upon the stream of life. But what a wreck! Blind, deaf, dumb, and, moreover, without that distinct consciousness of individual existence which is developed by the exercise of the senses. I say 'distinct consciousness' in comparison with that of ordinary persons; for, of course, the general sense of touch, the capacity of muscular contraction, the feeling of hunger, thirst, and the like, are part of the consciousness of existence.

"A most interesting psychological question is, how much exercise did she have of the senses of sight and hearing, during the period in which the organs of those faculties remained intact; and how far did such exercise facilitate her subsequent mental development?

"We should consider that during most of her early infancy the system was frequently disturbed by disease; that there were only a few months during which the

senses could have been in healthy action; and that this period was followed by painful and severe disorders during two years. These disorders must have convulsed the system, and perhaps weakened if not effaced the impressions received through the senses, so that probably very little, if any, permanent impression was made; and when the child finally was restored to health of body, she was as one born deaf, blind, and without smell. She certainly was in this condition for all practical educational purposes."

Such is the account given of the blind, deaf, and dumb Bridgman child by her friend and benefactor, Dr. Howe. She had, however, an earlier friend of whom the doctor tells us.

There often came to the Bridgman farmhouse a guest welcome to all, but most welcome to Laura, Mr. Asa Tenney, an eccentric old bachelor, Laura's first friend and playmate. The tenderness with which this rough and simple man took the afflicted child to his heart is infinitely touching. In later years Dr. Howe wrote concerning him: —

"He was a rude, unlettered man, but his lonely self-reliance, and his entire independence of thought and action, made him to be regarded as a sort of philosopher, with a crack in his skull. He was rough in look, and rude in manner, but little Laura found under the coarse bark a kind and warm heart, which she contrived to touch, and from which there flowed toward her, as long as it beat, a stream of love and kindness.

"He became interested in the little deaf, dumb, and blind child, and as soon as she could walk out, he used to lead her off into the fields and woods. They rambled

about hand in hand, and he contrived to interest and amuse her for hours together, without wearying her.

"The bare presence of one whose love she could feel by his gentle attentions, would have been enough to make the child happy; but, besides this, the simple man contrived to teach her much in various ways. She tells now how he taught her the difference between land and water, by leading her to the brookside and making her put her hand in the running stream. She loved also to pick up stones, and throw them in, amazed and pleased by feeling the returning splash of water. The good man did not see how soon she would exhaust his resources. He had not the slightest idea of the importance of having some regular system of signs, by which communication could be established with her mind, and her growing thirst for knowledge supplied, and he scouted the notion of anybody's being able to teach her more than he could. She knew him from anybody else; and she knew a cat from a dog, an apple from a stone, and he could teach her anything in the same way by which she had learned these things. He looked with great disfavor, therefore, upon the project of her going to school; and after she went he long mourned her loss."

Her mother, who was an excellent housewife, had necessarily little time to devote to Laura. Harmony Bridgman's life was a busy one. She not only did all her own work, but we learn that she had a loom at which she wove cloth, and a spinning-wheel on which she spun flax. She made the clothes and knitted the stockings and gloves for the family. Her cooking, which was done over an open fire in a large fireplace, must have been very good, for her daughter never for-

got the taste of the pies and the cakes baked in the great oven, which was heated once a week.

They had no matches, no cooking-stove, no carpets in those days, and the only plaything that Laura remembers to have had was an old boot of her father's, which she carried about in her arms. She never knew any other doll until much later.

In this age of specialization it is hard to realize the varied occupations of a New England housewife seventy years ago. Are there many women today capable of doing the things that Harmony Bridgman did as a matter of course? She cooked, she washed, she spun, she wove, she knitted, she churned, she raised poultry, bees, and lambs, she made soap and candles; and though it is not set down in any chronicle, she doubtless made rag carpets for her house.

To her friend and benefactor "Uncle Asa," as Mr. Tenney was called, Laura owed her daily exercise. It was he who took her out into the open air, which was of such vital importance to her. He gave her a little tin plate, which she valued highly, and out of which she always ate her food.

Mr. Tenney's appearance must have been very singular. His dress was always old and shabby, his hat was unlike any other hat in the village. He seems to have had an impediment in his speech, or an unconquerable incoherency, for he had great difficulty in making himself understood by his friends.

Uncle Asa, to every one else the poor innocent, to be pitied and tolerated for Christ's sake, was all-important

to Laura. He was the first to minister to her higher wants, he was the all-powerful, all-good genius of her early days. She knew his step, and was glad when he came, and very sorry when he went away. Her temper, which at an early date made itself manifest, was rarely roused by him, but on one occasion she snatched off his spectacles in a moment of rage and crushed them. He had not the heart to punish this offence in any way.

There seems to have been little that was demonstrative in the relations of the family; years afterwards, in speaking of this time, Laura says, "I never knew how to kiss my boot" (which served for a doll) "nor any of my folks."

Laura had a little cane arm-chair, which her Grandfather Bridgman had made for her, and she was very fond of sitting in this before the fire. After a morning spent in following her mother's busy feet as she went about her household tasks, and tended the younger children who crowded thick and fast into the world, we can fancy Laura sitting before the fire in her accustomed seat, playing with the long-suffering cat she so loved and abused.

The day has been long, no one has had time to pay much attention to her; father, mother, and grandfather are all busy; there is little for this sightless, speechless creature to do but wait and hope for that familiar step. Presently she feels the door open, she feels the beloved step on the kitchen floor, kind fingers stroke her cheek, strong hands pick up the chair and she is tossed about and about in Uncle Asa's kind arms.



The Bridgman Homestead, Hanover, N. H.



If the day be fair he takes her by the hand and leads her out of doors upon the "soft green carpet." If her tender little bare feet are irritated by the grass, he lifts her in his arms and carries her over the rough places. He contrives a seat for her against a fallen tree and gathers berries, which they eat together, sitting side by side on the river bank, two maimed creatures unlike their kind, objects of fear and pity to the villagers, but finding in their speechless communion who knows what comfort — what consolation?

But the time had come when a stronger hand was needed to lead the little child. The dumb love and sympathy of Uncle Asa had done what they could, and now the fine intellect, the high courage, the tireless patience, of one of the noblest of men was brought to the aid of the afflicted child.

One of the first links in the chain of circumstances that made Laura Bridgman the remarkable woman she became, is to be found in the fact that the selectmen of Hanover had little time or inclination to make out their tax bills. The work of assessment must be done in May, when, as everybody knows, farmers have plenty of other work to keep them busy.

In the year 1837 the selectmen called in a young collegian, Mr. James Barrett, a member of the junior class of Dartmouth College, to help them. The work was done at the farmhouse of Daniel Bridgman some seven miles from the college, and there Mr. Barrett saw the strange dumb child, and was so much moved by the pathos of her sightless eyes and speechless lips, that

he spoke of her to Dr. Mussey, then the head of the medical department at Dartmouth College. At Mr. Barrett's suggestion, Dr. Mussey went to see the child, and soon after wrote an account of her.

In the article in *Barnard's*, Dr. Howe says:

"The first knowledge I had of Laura's existence was from reading an account of her case written by Dr. Mussey, then resident at Hanover. It struck me at once that here was an opportunity of assisting an unfortunate child, and, moreover, of deciding the question so often asked, whether a blind-mute could be taught to use an arbitrary language. I had concluded, after closely watching Julia Brace, the well-known blind-mute in the American Asylum at Hartford, that the trial should not be abandoned, though it had failed in her case, as well as in all that had been recorded before."

Dr. Howe had already given much thought to the question as to whether a deaf, dumb, and blind person could receive an education. With what emotions he must have read Dr. Mussey's letter, those who know the vivid imagination, the prompt and ready character of the man can easily conceive. A deaf, dumb, and blind child lived in New England, in one of the states whose blind children it was his charge to educate. He determined to lose no time in visiting the child, and started for New Hampshire forthwith. The journey to Hanover was made in company with the poet Longfellow, Rufus Choate, George Hillard, and young Samuel Eliot, a lad of fifteen, on whose mind so keen an impress of that journey remained that in 1889 he wrote the following account of it to Mrs. Hall:—

"Your father was one of a party of four (or five, including myself, then 15 years old) as far as Hanover, N. H. The others were Rufus Choate, G. S. Hillard, and Longfellow, at whose invitation I was allowed to go. Choate was to join his family at Hanover and stay there, the others were to travel farther to the White Mts.; but Hanover was the first point with your father, on Laura's account, and with Hillard, because of an oration he was to deliver before a Dartmouth College literary society at Commencement. Your father had the patience to hear his friend's oration on the first day's stay at Hanover. On the second he easily tore himself from the commencement exercises, and drove to the Bridgman house in quest of his prize.

"He won it, and came back to the hotel triumphant. I do not remember his speaking of Laura beforehand, but he probably did to his older companions. I perfectly recollect his exultation at having secured her, and the impression he made on me by his chivalric benevolence. All through the journey, comparatively a long one, as we travelled by stage-coach or wagon (not on horseback) after leaving Lowell until we reached Portland, all through I was thrilled by the spirit constantly expressing itself in his words and actions. He talked to me of Greece and of other things in which he was interested, and all the hero worship of a boy was stirred within me. He kept on through the White Mts. with his friends, and at Portland he and Hillard left Longfellow at the paternal mansion and went home."

On the second day of the commencement exercises at Dartmouth College, Laura Bridgman was led by her mother into the rarely used "spare parlor," where she found a gentleman waiting to see her. She had never

known so tall a person, and was very much afraid of him, though he took her hand very gently in his. He had brought her a present of a silver pencil-case, but she was so much terrified by the visitor that she let the gift fall and never again found it. Even in her fear of the stranger she seems to have realized that he was kind and gentle.

At the moment that the child entered the "spare parlor" the first phase of her life came to an end. Behind her lay the warm kitchen, the old fireplace near which stood her little chair, the cradle in which she had lain for weeks a helpless infant, kept alive through months of suffering only by her mother's care and devotion. If any prophet had foretold what a future lay before that little trembling child standing alone in silent darkness, linked to her kind only by the bond of a common humanity, who would have given him credence!

"It was rather a discouragement," Dr. Howe says later, "to find that Laura had no sense of smell; or, to be more precise, only the latent capacity for using it; the organ of that sense not having been destroyed by the disease, as had those of sight and hearing. . . . I determined, however, to make an attempt to reach her mind through the one remaining sense, especially as there was something about her which seemed to give promise of her aiding the attempt as much as she could.

"The loss of the eye-balls of course occasioned some deformity, but otherwise she was a comely child. She had a good form and regular features; but what was of

vastly more importance, there were marks of fineness in her organization; and the nervous temperament predominated. This gave sensibility, activity, and, of course, capacity.

"I found that she had become familiar with much in the world about her. She knew the form, weight, density, and temperature of things in the house. She used to follow her mother about, clinging to her dress, and feeling her arms and hands when she was doing any work. The faculty of imitation of course led her to strive to do whatever she perceived others doing, whether she could understand it or not.

"She knew every one of the household, and seemed to be fond of them. She loved to be noticed and caressed; but, as she grew up out of infancy into childhood, the necessity of greater means of mental intercourse with others began to be painfully apparent. Endearments and caresses suffice only for infants. As the brain and other parts of the nervous system were developed, there arose a necessity for the development of the mental and moral capacities. Her mind and spirits were as cruelly cramped by her isolation as the foot of a Chinese girl is cramped by an iron shoe. Growth would go on; and without room to grow naturally deformity must follow. The child began to have a will of her own. The means of communicating with her were so limited that she could only understand the pleasure and displeasure of others. Patting her head signified approval, rubbing her hand disapproval; pushing her one way meant to go, and drawing her another to come. There was nothing to reach the moral sense. The earliest exercise of this must be to reverence something; and all that Laura could revere was strength. Then, when thwarted, she began to disregard the will of her mother, and only

yielded to the sign made by the heavier hand of her father. This was not laid upon her in anger, but its weight was not lightened, as was that of the mother by woman's timidity. It said plainly, 'I am mightier than thou,' and she yielded. This, however, could not have continued long without deplorable results. Laura's mother was discreet and kind, but so occupied by household cares as to be unable to study her case, or give her special attention.

"It is often one of the parent's hardest lessons, to learn to yield up timely and gracefully the authority which was once necessarily despotic, but which should soon become responsible, and soon afterwards be abdicated altogether. The inner man will not go long on all fours, any more than will the outer man. It will get up, and insist upon walking about. If it cannot go openly and boldly, it will go slyly, and this of course makes it cowardly. You may as well refuse to let out the growing boy's trousers as refuse larger and larger liberty to his growing individuality. This, however, is too often done. Irreverence may, perhaps, be too characteristic of the youth of our country; but the cause of it is not always early rational liberty. On the contrary, there are many cases where that resistance to tyranny, which is obedience to God, might have saved children who were lost by resorting to hypocrisy and cunning, rather than utterly yield what their instincts told them it was wrong to yield, though dignified by the name of filial duty.

"To honor father and mother is a beautiful command, but it may sometimes be best kept by respectful determination to enjoy more and more of that freedom of thought and action which is as essential to the healthy development of manly character as air and space are to the healthy growth of muscle and limb. It is often diffi-

cult for the parent to hit the right mean, and to give up authority just as fast as the child can wield it, but no faster; for there should not be any interregnum.

"It is easy to see that in the case of Laura, all these difficulties were greatly increased; and indeed, that they never would have been overcome while she was limited in her communication with others to the narrow sign language of the sense of touch. There could be little appeal to her intellect, none to her moral sense. She had begun to manifest a reluctance at yielding up her will to the will of others, that would in all probability have grown with her growth and strengthened with her strength. There was danger of the necessity of a final resort to the *ultima ratio* of force, and this is usually demoralizing to both parties.

"It is true, hers was a woman's gentler nature; but, to offset this, it must be borne in mind that nothing can compensate for want of development of moral sense. That alone can properly regulate the development of the animal nature. Laura had the capacity, it is true, for becoming a gentle, docile woman; but she had the liability also of becoming a ferocious and unmanageable one.

"Her parents, who were intelligent and most worthy persons, yielded to my earnest solicitations, and Laura was brought to the Institution for the Blind, in October, 1837, being then seven years old."

III

1837-1838

LAURA'S ARRIVAL IN BOSTON — FIRST LESSONS — LETTERS TO MR. BRIDGMAN — CORRESPONDENCE OF DR. HOWE AND MRS. SIGOURNEY — REPORT FOR 1838

IN the month of October, 1837, Mr. and Mrs. Bridgman and Laura left Hanover for Boston. Their departure was bitterly resented by Mr. Tenney, who regarded the separation of his little friend from her parents and himself as most unwise. He looked upon her new friend Dr. Howe with suspicion, and could never be persuaded that there was any wisdom in taking the child away from her home.

The journey was made partly in a chaise and partly by stage-coach. When the party reached the institution they were received by Dr. Howe and his sister, who at that time lived with him. Miss Howe, or Miss Jeannette as she was usually called, took the poor terrified child in her charge and tried her best to comfort her.

On the 8th of November, a short time after Laura's arrival at the institution, Dr. Howe writes to Mr. Bridgman, describing her condition: —

"DEAR SIR: — Your little girl is in very good health and spirits. She was rather dull for two days after you left her, and cried two or three times, but after that she became very lively, and I do not think that she repines at all for her home now.

"We have had some printing done for her, and I shall soon be able to inform you what prospect there is of her deriving much benefit from her residence here."

The following extracts are taken from the accounts printed at different times by Dr. Howe, of the first steps in Laura's education.[1]

"I required her by signs, which she soon came to understand, to devote several hours a day to learning to use her hands, and to acquiring command of her muscles and limbs, but my principal aim and hope was, to enable her to recognize the twenty-six signs which represent the letters of the alphabet. She submitted to the process patiently, though without understanding its purport. . . .

"Meanwhile her sign language was daily augmented. She had a special liking for figs, and one of the first signs which she learned to make was the sign for a fig."

The interest, with which every movement, every gesture of the young stranger was studied, can well be imagined. The methods by which she made herself familiar with the new locality in which she found herself were eagerly scrutinized.

From the very first she seems to have recognized Dr. Howe as her best friend. The patience with which he strove day after day to reach her intelligence, to establish a connection between her mind and his own,

[1] Notes, page 372.

was met with an equal patience on the part of the child, who, it is to be remembered, was by no means of a docile disposition. At the time she left Hanover her father was the only person who could control her; to enforce his authority he stamped upon the floor, a sign Laura understood was to be obeyed. This obedience was one of fear, not of reason. She knew that her father was strong and that he could force her to do what he wished; hence when she felt him stamp upon the floor, she knew that she must willingly do the thing indicated to her by one of the few rough signs she understood, or else be compelled to do it.

Of this strange rescue, this throwing a life line to a drifting wreck of humanity, we can know only one side, that of the rescuer. Of his doubts, his fears, his courage and hope, we have some slight record, but of what went on in the mind of the child we know little, and what we can learn is from Dr. Howe's brief accounts of those days of trial.

Dr. Howe has left this account of Laura's first lessons: —

"She seemed quite bewildered at first, but soon grew contented, and began to explore her new dwelling. Her little hands were continually stretched out, and her tiny fingers in constant motion, like the feelers of an insect.

"She was left for several days to form acquaintance with the little blind girls, and to become familiar with her new home. Then the attempt was made, systematically, to give her a knowledge of language, by which, and

by which only, she could ever attain to any considerable development of intellect, or of affections.

"One of two ways was to be adopted. The first and easiest was to go on and build up a system of signs upon the basis of the natural language, which she had already begun to construct for herself. Every deaf mute does this. He makes signs for the things which he sees, and he addresses these signs to the sense which he has in common with you, that is, to your sight. He lifts his fingers to his mouth, and makes the motion of putting something into it, to show you that he is hungry or thirsty; or, he holds up one, two, or five fingers, when he wants to express his notion of number. Hence, in old English 'to five,' was to count; because, among unlettered people, counting was done by five fingers. You see children using their fingers to aid them in counting; and many grown people have to use audible sounds, or to *count out loud*, in order to aid the mental process, which cannot go on without a sign.

"Laura could not address any sign to the sight, because she had no idea of visual appearances of things. She could, however, make a sign for being hungry, another for being thirsty. She had several signs of her own for several persons and things. It would have been easy to go on and enlarge this list, and make it include all tangible objects. But, of course, this plan would have required a sign for every object; one for a pin, another for a needle, another for an apple, and so on. She would, in this way, need as many hundreds or thousands of signs as she had objects or thoughts to express by them. Such a language could be taught easily, because she had acquired its rudiments; but it would have been very rude and imperfect. It could hardly go beyond material existences and tangible qualities. When

it came to be applied to abstract matters and moral qualities, it would have been utterly at fault.

"The other plan was to teach her a system of purely arbitrary signs, by combination of which she could give names to anything and everything, that is, the letters of the alphabet. For this she would only have to learn twenty-six signs, but, having learned them, she could express countless modifications of thought by combining them in countless ways.

"The obvious difficulty in the way of this plan was to take the first step. There was no such difficulty in the plan of a natural language, for in this the first step was already taken. For instance, her father's whiskers made his face different from her mother's; the sign therefore of drawing her hand down each of her cheeks would express that she was thinking of her father, and, by a natural mental process, it would be made to signify men in general, as distinguished from women. So a motion of her fingers like scratching with claws, would signify a cat; a motion of her two first fingers like cutting with scissors, would signify her thought of that instrument, and the like, because there was, so to speak, in all these a *tangible* likeness. There was some analogy between the thing and its sign; hence such signs were the rudiments of a natural language.

"Words, however, though many of them may have originated in a supposed resemblance between the thing and its name (as clang, bang, and the like), have no such analogy. They are purely arbitrary. But Laura could not hear the spoken word, or name of a thing, and she could not see the visible sign of it, or the written word, and learn as deaf-mutes learn; consequently the only way was to make the word sign tangible. But here the main difficulty met us; and it was how to make her

understand the arbitrary analogy which we would establish between three, or four, or more letters, and the thing of which it is the name.

"That it was possible to do this, however, will be seen, when we consider that, however shorn of external organs of sense, the child was not idiotic. She possessed therefore all the ordinary dispositions and capacities innate in man. Among these is the disposition to attach signs to thoughts, so as to manifest them outwardly; that is, to use language. The natural form of this manifestation is that of audible signs, or spoken words; speech not being an elected mode, but the natural one. Where hearing is cut off, the child resorts to visible language, or talks by signs; if sight too is cut off, still the disposition remains, and upon the faith of its being active in Laura, our hopes of teaching her to use language was founded.

"I had to trust, however, to some chance effort of mine, causing her to perceive the analogy between the signs which I gave her, and the things for which they stood. . . . The first experiments were made by pasting upon several common articles, such as keys, spoons, knives, and the like, little paper labels on which the name of the article had been printed in raised letters. The child sat down with her teachers and was easily led to feel these labels, and examine them curiously. So keen was the sense of touch in her tiny fingers that she immediately perceived that the crooked lines in the word *key*, differed as much in form from the crooked lines in the word *spoon* as one article differed from the other.

"Next, similar labels, on detached pieces of paper, were put into her hands, and she now observed that the raised letters on these labels resembled those pasted upon the articles. She showed her perception of this resem-

blance by placing the label with the word *key* upon the key, and the label *spoon* upon the spoon. A gentle pat of approval upon her head was reward enough; and she showed a desire to continue the exercise, though utterly unconscious of its purpose.

"The same process was then repeated with a variety of articles in common use, and she learned to match the label attached to each one by a similar label selected from several on the table.

"After continuing this exercise several days, with care not to weary her, a new step was taken. Articles were placed upon the table without having a label upon them, as a book, a knife, etc. The loose printed labels, *book*, *knife*, etc., were placed upon the articles until she had felt them sufficiently, when they were taken off, and mingled in a heap. She narrowly watched the process by feeling her teacher's hands, and soon learned to imitate it by finding out the label for *book*, and placing it upon the volume; the same with the *knife*, etc.

"This apparently was all done by mere memory and imitation, but probably the natural tendency of the mind to associate things that are proximate in space and time, was leading her to think of the label *book* as a sign for the volume. Let it be borne in mind that the four letters were to her, not as four separate signs, but the whole was as one complex sign, made up of crooked lines.

"The next step was to give a knowledge of the component parts of the complex sign, *book*, for instance. This was done by cutting up the label into four parts, each part having one letter upon it. These were first arranged in order, b-o-o-k, until she had learned it, then mingled up together, then re-arranged, she feeling her teacher's hand all the time, and eager to begin and try to solve a new step in this strange puzzle.

"Slowly and patiently, day after day, and week after week, exercises like these went on, as much time being spent at them as the child could give without fatigue. Hitherto there had been nothing very encouraging; not much more success than in teaching a very intelligent dog a variety of tricks. But we were approaching the moment when the thought would flash upon her that all these were efforts to establish a means of communication between her thoughts and ours."

This supreme moment in Laura Bridgman's history is beautifully described by Dr. Howe: —

"The poor child had sat in mute amazement, and patiently imitated everything her teacher did; but now the truth began to flash upon her, her intellect began to work, she perceived that here was a way by which she could herself make up a sign of anything that was in her own mind, and show it to another mind, and at once her countenance lighted up with a human expression; it was no longer a dog or parrot, — it was an immortal spirit, eagerly seizing upon a new link of union with other spirits! I could almost fix upon the moment when this truth dawned upon her mind, and spread its light to her countenance; I saw that the great obstacle was overcome, and that henceforward nothing but patient and persevering, plain and straightforward efforts were to be used."

"In order to facilitate her progress," says Dr. Howe again, "a set of types was procured, with the letters in high relief upon their ends. Then a metal frame was cast, and the surface perforated with square holes, into which the types could be set, in such a way as to be in rows, and to have only the letters upon their end felt above the surface. With this machine she could arrange the letters which 'spelt out' the names of any article;

she could have many rows of those names; she could correct any mistake in the spelling, and could pursue her exercise until she wished to take out the types and put in new ones.

"Many weeks were passed in this exercise, when the attempt was made to substitute her own fingers and hand for the cumbrous apparatus of the types and metal board. The attempt was successful, and the success was easily gained, because her mind had become very active, and she made constant efforts to aid her teacher.

"Acting still upon her disposition to associate things that were placed in apposition, the teacher took a type which she had learned to use, and of which she knew the form, though she could not know that it was called *a*, and, holding it in one hand, made with the fingers of the other hand the sign used in the deaf-mute language to express the letter A. This was repeated over and over so often that the child associated the sign upon the fingers with the sign upon the end of the type; and the one became a sign or name for the other.

"Next, another letter was taken, say B, and the same process gone over and over. Soon the child caught the idea that there were new signs for things. When she had learned these on four types, these were put together, and she was taught that four different positions of the fingers, standing for four signs on the ends of the types, would express *apple*, in the same way she had been doing it by the types.

"The process was continued until she had learned all the letters of the alphabet, and then of course she had the key to our language, and every language whose written signs are Roman letters.

"It will help the reader in understanding this rather obscure description of a novel process, if he will bear in

mind that it is not by any means an essential way, perhaps not even the best way, to teach common children their letters in alphabetical order, — a, b, c, d, and so on." [1]

This idea, which now is so familiar to us, had not at that time been suggested. In this as in a thousand other instances we find that in educational matters Dr. Howe was not only in advance of his age, but in harmony with the most advanced thoughts of the present epoch.

In 1874 Dr. Howe adds: —

"Afterwards she learned the names of the ten numerals or digits, of the punctuation and exclamation and interrogation points, some forty-six in all. With these she could express the name of everything, of every thought, of every feeling, and all the numberless shades thereof. She had thus got the '*open sesame*' to the whole treasury of the English language. She seemed aware of the importance of the process; and worked at it eagerly and incessantly, taking up various articles, and inquiring by gestures and looks what signs upon her fingers were to be put together in order to express their names. At times she was too radiant with delight to be able to conceal her emotions."

The doctor's first letter to Mr. Bridgman, it will be remembered, was very guarded; it promised nothing, and merely assured the parents of the child's well-being, and that it would soon be shown whether or not she would be benefited by her stay at the institution.

[1] Notes, page 372.

The second letter, written two months after her arrival, is in a very different strain. The first step was already taken, and the child had entered into the great human brotherhood of love and sympathy, from which she had seemed to be forever shut out: —

Dec. 8, 1837.

To Mr. Bridgman:

Dear Sir, — I have the pleasure to inform you that your daughter is in excellent health and spirits. As far as I learn the operation of her mind, she is always contented, generally cheerful, and very often excited and mirthful, which she manifests by laughing and frolicking.

I have succeeded in making her understand several words in raised print, and I am very sanguine in the hope that she will learn to read, and perhaps to express her wants in writing.

One thing I feel confident of, that her mental powers will be much strengthened, and that many of them, which would have lain dormant, will be developed and made active.

I should like to have you write me an account of her situation before she was blind, the time and so forth of her loss of senses. Please answer me soon and fully; never mind how many pages or sheets you fill up.

Truly yours,

S. G. Howe.

Six months after Laura's arrival Dr. Howe writes to her parents with less reserve. He is surer now of the success of his great experiment, and his words have a jubilant ring of triumph.

March 30, 1838.

MR. AND MRS. BRIDGMAN:

My Friends, — I am happy to inform you of the continued health and happiness of your daughter. I do not think she repines in the least for her home, and although I do not suppose she has forgotten her parents, or diminished her affection for them, still her time is so taken up with study, and new objects, and play that she seems to enjoy every moment.

I have not known her sad but once for a long time, and that was early in the morning about a fortnight ago. I went into the parlor and Laura was sitting drooping on the sofa, alone and seeming quite low-spirited. The moment I took her hand she spelt her teacher's name, Drew, with her fingers, and made a sign that she had gone away in a carriage. I did not know this, but on inquiry I found she had gone out quite early to drive. As soon as the other children were out of school, Laura joined them and was soon gay again.

You know I have been very careful about promising too much, but I think I may now safely say that Laura will learn much that will be useful to her, and that she will attain a sufficient knowledge of language to express many of her wants and to make herself much more happy and useful.

She now makes all the letters easily and rapidly with her fingers, and understands them when made by any one else; if she wants bread, for instance, she makes the signs for the letters, b,r,e,a,d, and if I wish her to go and shut a door, or open a door, or carry anything to any person, I make the letters of the word upon my fingers, she feels of them, understands them, and goes and does what is required.

Even if she should not go farther than the simplest

signs, it is much better to have a regular system, which any one can understand, and by which they can communicate with her, than have an arbitrary set of signs, which no one can learn except by being long with her. For instance, you may have a sign by which you tell Laura to shut the door, and others for various things, but suppose you are taken away and wish other persons to take charge of her, they will have to learn every one of your different signs, for every different thing, and this would be very difficult; whereas by sitting down one hour, any person can learn to make the letters with their fingers, and to talk with her.

Respecting the support of Laura here, do not give yourself any uneasiness. A way will be provided; all that will be required of you will be to keep her provided with decent clothing.

I sent you one of our Reports, in which Laura's case is particularly detailed; she is an object of great interest, and hundreds of people would come here to see her if they were allowed; but I do not wish her to be made an object of envious gaze, I do not allow her to be seen except by very few. On the days of public exhibition, her teacher is to keep her in her chamber, or go out to walk with her.

Mrs. Smith will write you in the course of a few days.

Truly yours,

S. G. Howe.

P. S. Please give my respects to Mr. Tenney. I think he must be a kind-hearted and good man, from the strong interest he manifests for our little Laura.

All the inmates of the institution felt the deepest interest in Laura's education. She became much attached to the matron, Mrs. Smith, and to Miss Drew,

the teacher whom Dr. Howe selected to assist him in his instruction of Laura.

Dr. Howe's journals and correspondence show how much absorbed he was at this time in the study of Laura's case. He could hardly write a letter without referring to her. Every spare hour of the day or night was given to devising new methods for teaching her.

He gives an account of Mrs. Bridgman's first visit to her daughter: —

"During this year and six months after she had left home, her mother came to visit her, and the scene of their meeting was an interesting one.

"The mother stood some time gazing with overflowing eyes upon her unfortunate child, who, all unconscious of her presence, was playing about the room. Presently Laura ran against her, and at once began feeling of her hands, examining her dress, and trying to find out if she knew her; but not succeeding in this, she turned away as from a stranger, and the poor woman could not conceal the pang she felt at finding that her beloved child did not know her.

"She then gave Laura a string of beads which she used to wear at home, which were recognized by the child at once, who, with much joy, put them around her neck, and sought me eagerly, to say she understood the string was from her home.

"The mother tried to caress her, but poor Laura repelled her, preferring to be with her acquaintances.

"Another article from home was now given her, and she began to look much interested; she examined the stranger much closer, and gave me to understand that she knew she came from Hanover; she even endured her

caresses, but would leave her with indifference at the slightest signal. The distress of the mother was now painful to behold; for, although she had feared that she should not be recognized, the painful reality of being treated with cold indifference by a darling child was too much for woman's nature to bear.

"After a while, on the mother taking hold of her again, a vague idea seemed to flit across Laura's mind that this could not be a stranger; she therefore felt of her hands very eagerly, while her countenance assumed an expression of intense interest; she became very pale, and then suddenly red; hope seemed struggling with doubt and anxiety, and never were contending emotions more strongly painted upon the human face. At this moment of painful uncertainty, the mother drew her close to her side and kissed her fondly; when at once the truth flashed upon the child, and all mistrust and anxiety disappeared from her face, as with an expression of exceeding joy she eagerly nestled to the bosom of her parent, and yielded herself to her fond embraces.

"After this the beads were all unheeded; the playthings which were offered to her were utterly disregarded; her playmates, for whom but a moment before she gladly left the stranger, now vainly strove to pull her from her mother; and though she yielded her usual instantaneous obedience to my signal to follow me, it was evidently with painful reluctance. She clung close to me, as if bewildered and fearful; and when, after a moment, I took her to her mother, she sprang to her arms, and clung to her with eager joy.

"I had watched the whole scene with intense interest, being desirous of learning from it all I could of the workings of her mind; but I now left them to indulge unob-

served those delicious feelings which those who have known a mother's love may conceive, but which cannot be expressed.

"The subsequent parting between Laura and her mother showed alike the affection, the intelligence, and the resolution of the child; and was thus noticed at the time: —

"'Laura accompanied her mother to the door, clinging close to her all the way, until they arrived at the threshold, where she paused, and felt around, to ascertain who was near her. Perceiving the matron, of whom she is very fond, she grasped her with one hand, holding on convulsively to her mother with the other, and thus she stood for a moment; then she dropped her mother's hand, put her handkerchief to her eyes, and, turning round, clung sobbing to the matron, while her mother departed, with emotions as deep as those of her child.'"

Though at this period Laura was first in his thoughts, there were many other objects for which Dr. Howe was working zealously. One of his cherished designs was to create a library of books in raised print for the blind. He accomplished much in this direction, though was never satisfied with what he had done.

Encouraged by his success in teaching Laura, Dr. Howe looked about to find other similarly afflicted children. The first of these who came to share Laura's lessons was Oliver Caswell, concerning whom Dr. Howe writes to a Newport clergyman, Rev. Mr. Dumont: —

"You will perhaps recollect that I called upon you, several weeks ago, respecting a little deaf, dumb and

blind boy, son of the ferryman between Newport and Conanicut.

"My object in writing now is to ask if you have had any conversation with the father on the subject of sending the boy to this institution, and what are his views.

"He can be admitted here now, if he applies; and no further expense will be incurred by his relatives than to keep him decently clad.

"I really hope for the boy's sake and for the sake of science that an opportunity may be had of trying to overcome the obstacle in the way of the development of his mind. An opportunity is now offered to the father to get instruction for his unfortunate son which may never occur again; and I hope you will induce him to avail himself of it."

We shall hear again of this little boy, who was to be the friend and companion of Laura Bridgman.

Laura's progress during the year 1838 is thus summed up by Dr. Howe:[1]—

"The whole of the year was passed in gratifying Laura's eager inquiries for the names of every object which she could possibly handle; in exercising her in the use of the manual alphabet; in extending by every possible way her knowledge of the physical relations of things; and in taking proper care of her health.

"It has been ascertained, beyond the possibility of doubt, that she cannot see a ray of light, cannot hear the least sound, and never exercises her sense of smell, if she has any. Thus her mind dwells in darkness and stillness, as profound as that of a closed tomb at midnight. Of beautiful sights, and sweet sounds, and pleasant odors, she has no conception; nevertheless she seems as happy and playful as a bird or a lamb; and the employment

[1] Notes, page 373.

of her intellectual faculties, the acquirement of a new idea, gives her a vivid pleasure, which is plainly marked in her expressive features. She never seems to repine, but has all the buoyancy and gaiety of childhood. She is fond of fun and frolic, and when playing with the rest of the children her shrill laugh sounds loudest of the group.

"When left alone she seems very happy if she has her knitting or sewing, and will busy herself for hours; if she has no occupation she evidently amuses herself by imaginary dialogues, or recalling past impressions; she counts with her fingers, or spells out names of things, which she has recently learned, in the manual alphabet of the deaf mutes. In this lonely self-communion she reasons, reflects, and argues; if she spells a word wrong with the fingers of her right hand, she instantly strikes it with her left, as her teacher does, in sign of disapprobation; if right, then she pats herself upon the head and looks pleased. She sometimes purposely spells a word wrong with the left hand, looks roguish for a moment, and laughs, and then with the right hand strikes the left, as if to correct it.

"During the year she has attained great dexterity in the use of the manual alphabet of the deaf mutes; and she spells out the words and sentences which she knows, so fast and so deftly that only those accustomed to this language can follow, with the eye, the rapid motions of her fingers.

"But wonderful as is the rapidity with which she writes her thoughts upon the air, still more so is the ease and accuracy with which she reads the words thus written by others, grasping their hand in hers, and following every movement of their fingers, as letter after letter conveys their meaning to her mind. It is in this way that she

converses with her blind playmates; and nothing can more forcibly show the power of mind in forcing matter to its purpose than a meeting between them. For, if great talent and skill are necessary for two pantomimes to paint their thoughts and feelings by the movements of the body and the expression of the countenance, how much greater the difficulty when darkness shrouds them both and the one can hear no sound!

"When Laura is walking through a passage-way, with her hands spread before her, she knows instantly every one she meets, and passes them with a sign of recognition; but if it be a girl of her own age, and especially if one of her favorites, there is instantly a bright smile of recognition, an intertwining of arms, a grasping of hands, and a swift telegraphing upon the tiny fingers whose rapid evolutions convey the thoughts and feelings from the outposts of one mind to those of the other. There are questions and answers, exchanges of joy or sorrow; there are kissings and partings, just as between little children with all their senses.

"One such interview is a better refutation of the doctrine that mind is the result of sensation than folios of learned argument. If those philosophers, who consider man as only the most perfect animal, and attribute his superiority to his senses, be correct, then a dog or a monkey should have mental power quadruple that of poor Laura Bridgman, who has but one sense.

"We would not be understood to say that this child has the same amount of knowledge that others of her age have, — very far from it; she is nine years of age, and yet her knowledge of language is not greater than a common child of three years. There has been no difficulty in communicating knowledge of facts, positive qualities of bodies,[1] numbers, etc.; but the *words expressive of them,*

[1] Notes, page 373.

which other children learn by hearing, as they learn to talk, must all be communicated to Laura by a circuitous and tedious method. In all the knowledge, which is acquired by the perceptive faculties, she is of course backward; because, previous to her coming here, her perceptive faculties were probably less exercised in one week than those of common children are in one hour.

"What may be termed her moral nature, however, her sentiments and affections, her sense of propriety, of right, of property, etc., is equally well developed as those of other children."

IV

1839-1840

REMOVAL TO SOUTH BOSTON — VISIT TO HANOVER

AT the time of the removal of the school from Pearl Street to South Boston, the friends of the institution (it now numbered among these many of Boston's foremost citizens) were most generous in contributing funds to defray the expenses incidental to the change of habitation. Mr. Samuel Appleton, the president of the corporation, gave one thousand dollars, and smaller sums were contributed by George Ticknor, John A. Lowell, Josiah Quincy, Jr., William H. Prescott, F. C. Gray, Francis Fisher, Nathaniel Emmons, B. W. Crowninshield, and others. The crowning glory of the new institution was the beautiful new organ, presented by Mr. George Lee, and costing three thousand dollars.

No one was more delighted with the change than Laura Bridgman, who soon made herself familiar with the old hotel's long passages and labyrinth of rooms. In Dr. Howe's journal we find occasional mention of Laura's progress at this period: —

"*July* 24, 1839. Laura Bridgman succeeded for the first time in writing her own name in a legible manner, and manifested very great delight at its being legible to

others; she can now make correct sentences in the manual alphabet, and uses many particles which it was not supposed she could ever understand. She evidently knows the use of letters in writing, and seems delighted that she has found a new way of communicating her ideas to others."

"*August*, 1839. Laura Bridgman improves very fast — very industrious and correct."

"*Wed. Oct.* 2, 1839. Laura Bridgman examined — progresses well, takes much pleasure in writing especially; but she grows nervous after about 30 minutes' confinement to any one thing."

In the autumn of 1839 it was thought advisable to send Laura to her parents' home to pass the annual vacation.

She was accompanied by her teacher, Miss Drew, who remained with her during the visit of three weeks. On their arrival at Lebanon they were met by Mr. Bridgman, who had not seen Laura since the day when he had left her in her new home two years before, a frightened, weeping child, surrounded by strangers. He had, of course, been kept informed of the child's progress out of darkness toward the light; but seeing is believing, and we must think that he could never have realized the change which had taken place in her mental condition until that moment when he took her hand in his, and she, recognizing him by the touch, spelt the word "father" with her fingers.

They drove from Lebanon to Hanover, and when they had entered the old-fashioned farmhouse, Laura

could not wait to take off her bonnet and cloak, but led Miss Drew up and down stairs, into all the rooms of the house, asking the names of the familar objects they contained. The "spare parlor," the comfortable kitchen with its open fireplace and many kettles hanging from the iron hooks, the attic where the "spinner" and the hair-cloth trunks were kept, all contained things with whose use she was familiar, and whose names she wished to learn.

From room to room the little blind fairy flitted, touching her trundle-bed in her mother's bedroom; the old cradle in which she had lain for weary weeks and months of pain; her tiny rocking-chair made by her grandfather; and a thousand other objects, the name or use of which she asked to have explained. Outside the house, the barns and out-buildings were explored, and the mystery of the bee-hives was made clear to her. At last she was willing to sit down in her old place, and eat her supper out of the tin plate with the raised alphabet. The baked apples, the "cooky cakes," the "indian cakes," the cheese, and maple sugar, all prepared by the tireless hands of Harmony Bridgman, tasted wonderfully good to Laura.

Soon after her return to Hanover, Laura had a visit from Mr. Tenney; she was at this time very much afraid of all men, and with the exception of Dr. Howe would not willingly approach one. Her teacher feared that she might shrink from her father and from her old friend, but the child was not so forgetful. She greeted

Uncle Asa with delight, and the pair took up their old vagrant habits and wandered about together over the pleasant fields and hills.

It does not appear that Uncle Asa ever learned the finger alphabet, though Laura doubtless tried to teach it to him; but the two understood each other none the less, and until the end of her life Laura often mentioned her earliest friend with deep affection.

It was during this visit that Laura taught her mother the finger alphabet. There is no account preserved of these lessons. It is just as well that this is so, for there are some things that the imagination paints better than the pen. It is as if we had seen it all. The mother sitting at the end of the day's work beside the child with whom she had never thought to exchange a word, bending her toil-worn fingers to these new forms, signs which were to be the means of bringing the two nearer together than ever before.

When the time came for their return to Boston, the teacher was full of anxiety lest Laura should be unwilling to leave her old home, and should repeat the painful scene of her first parting from her mother at the institution. She had underrated the child's perceptions. Laura had understood the matter thoroughly before leaving Boston. She was going, like the other children, to pass the vacation with her relations; but she was glad to return at the end of three weeks to her new home, to her adopted father. She left her mother calmly, and returned to Boston, eager as Alexander for new conquests.

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Dr. Howe in 1839 gives a further account of Laura's progress during the year: —

"Having mastered the manual alphabet of the deaf mutes, and learned to spell readily the names of everything within her reach, she was then taught words expressive of positive qualities, as hardness, softness; and she readily learned to express the quality, by connecting the adjective 'hard' or 'soft' with the substantive; though she generally followed what one would suppose to be the natural order in the succession of ideas, placing the substantive first.[1]

"It was found too difficult, however, then, to make her understand any general expression of quality, as hardness, softness, in the abstract. Indeed, this is a process of mind most difficult of performance to any, especially to deaf mutes.

"One of her earliest sentences after learning the adjectives was this: she had found the matron ill, and understood that her head pained her; so she said, '*Smith head sick — Laura sorry.*'

"Next she was put to the positive expression of relation to place, which she could understand. For instance, a ring was taken and placed *on* a box, then the words were spelled to her, and she repeated them from imitation. Then the ring was placed *on* a hat, and a sign given her to spell; she spelled *ring on box;* but, being checked, and the right words given, she immediately began to exercise her judgment, and, as usual, seemed intently thinking. Then the same was repeated with a bag, a desk, and a great many other things, until, at last, she learned that she must name the thing *on* which the article rested.

"Then the same article was put *into* the box, and the

[1] Notes, page 373.

words *ring in box* given her; this puzzled her for many minutes, and she would make mistakes; for instance, after she had learned to say correctly whether the ring was *on* or *in* a box, a drawer, a hat, a bucket, etc., if she were asked where is house, or matron, she would say *in box*. Cross-questioning, however, is seldom necessary to ascertain whether she really understands the force of the words she is learning; for when the true meaning dawns upon her mind, the light spreads to her countenance.

"In this case the perception seemed instantaneous, and the natural sign by which she expressed it was peculiar and striking: she spelled *o n*, then laid one hand *on* the other; then she spelled *i n t o*, and inclosed one hand *within* the other.

"Some idea of the difficulty of teaching her common expressions, or the meaning of them, may be found from the fact that a lesson of two hours upon the words *right* and *left* was deemed very profitable, if she in that time really mastered the idea.

"An extract from the diary kept by her instructor will give an idea of her manner of questioning: —

"'*December* 3. Spent one hour in giving Laura an idea of the meaning of the words *left* and *right*. She readily conceived that left hand meant *her* left hand, but with difficulty generalized the term. At last, however, she caught the idea, and eagerly spelled the names of her arms, hands, fingers, feet, ears, etc., as they were touched, and named them, right or left, as might be; suddenly pausing, however, and looking puzzled, she put her finger on her *nose*, and asked if that were left or right; thus she continually puzzles one; but such is her eagerness to find out one's meaning, such a zealous co-operation is there on her part, that it is a delightful task to teach her.

"'Uses to-day freely the prepositions *in* and *on*; she says, "teacher sitting *in* sofa": do not dare to correct her in such cases

of anomalous usage of the preposition, but prefer to let her be in error, than shake her faith in a rule given; the corrections must be made by and by; the sofa having sides, she naturally says *in*.'

"In her eagerness to advance her knowledge of words and to communicate her ideas, she coins words, and is always guided by analogy. Sometimes her process of *word-making* is very interesting; for instance, after some time spent in giving her an idea of the abstract meaning of *alone*, she seemed to obtain it, and to understand that being *by one's self* was to be alone, or *al-one*. She was told to go to her chamber, or school, or elsewhere, and return *alone;* she did so, but soon after, wishing to go with one of the little girls, she strove to express her meaning thus, 'Laura go *al-two*.'

"She easily acquired a knowledge and use of active verbs, especially those expressive of *tangible action;* as, to walk, to run, to sew, to shake. At first, of course, no distinction could be made of mood and tense; she used the words in a general sense, and according to the order of her *sense of ideas;* thus, in asking some one to give her bread, she would first use the word expressive of the leading idea, and say, '*Laura*, *bread*, *give*.' If she wanted water, she would say, '*Water*, *drink*, *Laura*.' Soon, however, she learned the use of the auxiliary verbs, of the difference of the past, present and future tense; for instance, here is an early sentence, '*Keller is sick — when will Keller well?*' the use of *be* she had not acquired.[1]

"Having acquired the use of substantives, adjectives, verbs, prepositions, and conjunctions, it was deemed time to make the experiment of trying to teach her to *write*, and to show her that she might communicate her ideas to persons not in contact with her.

[1] Notes, page 374.

"It was amusing to witness the mute amazement with which she submitted to the process, the docility with which she imitated every motion, and the perseverance with which she moved her pencil over and over again in the same track, until she could form the letter. But when at last the idea dawned upon her, that by this mysterious process she could make other people understand what she thought, her joy was boundless. Never did a child apply more eagerly and joyfully to any task than she did to this, and in a few months she could make every letter distinctly, and separate words from each other.

"The following anecdote will give an idea of her fondness for teasing, or innocent fun or mischief. Her teacher, looking one day unobserved into the girls' playroom, saw three blind girls playing with the rocking-horse. Laura was on the crupper, another in the saddle, and a third clinging on the neck, and they were all in high glee, swinging backward and forward as far as the rockers would roll. There was a peculiarly arch look in Laura's countenance, — the natural language of sly fun. She seemed prepared to give a spring, and suddenly when her end was lowest, and the others were perched high in the air, she sidled quickly off upon the floor, and down went the other end so swiftly as to throw the girls off the horse. This Laura evidently expected, for she stood a moment convulsed with laughter, then ran eagerly forward with outstretched hands to find the girls, and almost screamed with joy. As soon, however, as she got hold of one of them, she perceived that she was hurt, and instantly her countenance changed; she seemed shocked and grieved, and, after caressing and comforting her playmate, she found the other, and seemed to apologize by spelling the word *wrong*, and caressing her.

"When she can puzzle her teacher, she is pleased, and often purposely spells a word wrong with a playful look; and, if she catch her teacher in a mistake, she bursts into an ecstasy of laughter.

"She has the same fondness for a dress, for ribbons, and for finery as other girls of her age, and, as a proof that it arises from the same amiable desire of pleasing others, it may be remarked that whenever she has a new bonnet or any new article of dress, she is particularly desirous to go to meeting, or to go out with it. If people do not notice it, she directs their attention by placing their hands upon it. Generally she indicates her preference for such visitors as are the best dressed.

"She is so much in company with blind persons that she thinks blindness common; and, when first meeting persons, she asks if they are blind, or she feels of their eyes. She evidently knows that the blind differ from seeing persons, for when she shows blind persons anything, she always puts their fingers on it. . . .

"She is pretty accurate in measuring time, and seems to have an intuitive tendency to do it. Unaided by the changes of night and day, by the light, or the sound of any timepiece, she nevertheless divides time accurately. . . .

"Acids seem to make vivid and distinct impression upon the taste, and she apparently distinguishes the different degrees of acidity better than of sweetness or bitterness. She can distinguish between wine, cider, and vinegar better than substances like manna, liquorice, and sugar. Of bitters she seems to have less perception, or indeed hardly any: for, on putting powdered rhubarb into her mouth, she called it *tea;* and on one saying *no*, and telling her to taste *close*, she evidently did try to taste it, but still called it tea, and spit it out, but without

any contortion or any indication of its being particularly disagreeable.

"Of course she has a repugnance to this kind of experiments and it seems almost imposing upon her good nature to push them very far; we shall, however, be soon able to ascertain certainly how far she can distinguish different sapid bodies. . . .

"With regard to the sense of touch, it is very acute, even for a blind person. It is shown remarkably in the readiness with which she distinguishes persons; there are forty inmates in the female wing, with all of whom of course Laura is acquainted; whenever she is walking through the passageways, she perceives by the jar of the floor, or the agitation of the air, that some one is near her, and it is exceedingly difficult to pass her without being recognized. Her little arms are stretched out, and the instant she grasps a hand, a sleeve, or even part of the dress, she knows the person, and lets them pass on with some sign of recognition. . . .

"Her judgment of distances and of relations of place is very accurate; she will rise from her seat, go straight towards a door, put out her hand just at the right time, and grasp the handle with precision. . . .

"She perceives the approach of persons by the undulations of the air striking her face; and she can distinguish the step of those who tread hard, and jar the floor.

"At table, if told to be still, she sits and conducts herself with propriety; handles her cup, spoon, and fork, like other children; so that a stranger looking at her would take her for a very pretty child with a green ribbon over her eyes.

"But, when at liberty to do as she chooses, she is continually feeling of things, and ascertaining their size,

shape, density, and use; asking their names and their purposes, going on with insatiable curiosity, step by step, towards knowledge. Thus doth her active mind, though all silent and darkling within, commune by means of her one sense with things external, and gratify its innate craving for knowledge by close and ceaseless attention."

From the earliest days of the school it has been the custom to hold weekly exhibitions, to which the friends of the institution and the general public are admitted. The doctor believed that these occasions benefited both the school and the community; but that his visitors were sometimes tedious, is easily imagined.

In Dr. Howe's school journal are frequent entries like the following: —

"*Saturday, Dec.* 7, 1839. Crowded house at exhibition; there are, however, too many children and idle girls and silly old women who ask the children a thousand foolish questions, and now and then a loafer who requires to be particularly attended to lest he inadvertently bears away more than he brings with him.

"*Saturday, Feb.* 15, 1840. Many visitors between 12 and 1. Laura proves the principal object of attraction. It is obvious that the effect upon her is unfavorable and that there is danger of her losing that pleasing modesty of demeanor which characterizes her: means must be used to prevent visitors from coming into contact with her."

The 20th of June, 1840, was a date which Laura would have carefully impressed upon her memory, had she realized how important a part of her education

began upon that day. She took her first lesson in arithmetic. The lesson was given with the aid of an ingenious device used by the blind, a metallic case perforated with square holes, two square types being used to represent the nine digits and the 0. Her teacher says: "She was delighted with her lesson, as she always is with anything new; but it took several days to make her understand the connection between the position of the type in the aperture and its significance."

Nineteen days after, we find it recorded that Laura has learned to add a column of figures amounting to thirty.

At the end of the year Dr. Howe made the following statement of Laura's progress: —

"Her health has been very good. She has not grown much in height, but her frame has filled out.

"A perceptible change has taken place in the size and shape of her head; and, although unfortunately the measurement taken two years ago has been mislaid, every one who has been well acquainted with her notices a marked increase in the size of the forehead. She is now just eleven years old; and her height is four feet, four inches and seven-tenths. Her head measures twenty inches and eight-tenths in circumference, in a line drawn around it, and passing over the prominences of the parietal and those of the frontal bones; above this line the head rises one inch and one-tenth, and is broad and full. The measurement is four inches from one orifice of the ear to the other; and from the occipital spine to the root of the nose, it is seven inches.

"Nothing has occurred to indicate the slightest perception of light or sound, or any hope of it; and, although some of those who are much with her suppose that her smell is more acute than it was, even this seems very doubtful. . . .

"Her sense of touch has evidently improved in acuteness; . . . her mental perceptions, resulting from sensation, are much more rapid than they were; for she now perceives, by the slightest touch, qualities and conditions of things similar to those she had formerly to feel long and carefully for. . . .

"The progress which she has made in intellectual acquirements can be fully appreciated by those only who have seen her frequently. The improvement, however, is made evident by her greater command of language, and by the conception which she now has of the force of parts of speech, which last year she did not use in her simple sentences; for instance, of pronouns, which she has begun to use within six months. Last spring, returning fatigued from her journey home, she complained of a pain in her side, and, on being asked what caused it, she used these words: '*Laura did go to see mother; ride did make Laura side ache, horse was wrong, did not run softly.*' If she were now to express the same thing, she would say, '*I* did go to see mother; ride did make *my* side ache,' etc. . . .

"She easily learned the difference between the singular and plural form, but was inclined for some time to apply the rule of adding *s*, universally. For instance, at her first lesson she had the words *arm*, *arms*, *hand*, *hands*, etc., then being asked to form the plural of box, she said boxs, etc., and for a long time she would form the plural by the general rule, as lady, ladys, etc.

"One of the girls had the mumps; Laura learned the

name of the disease, and soon after she had it herself, but she had the swelling only on one side; and, some one saying, 'you have got the mumps,' she replied quickly: '*No, no; I have mump.*'

"She was a long time in learning words expressive of comparison; indeed, her teacher quite despaired of making her understand the difference between good, better, and best, after having spent many days in the attempt. By perseverance, however, and by giving her an idea of comparative sizes, she was at last enabled to use comparisons pretty well. . . .

"She learned the difference between present and past tense during the last year, but made use of the auxiliaries; during this year she has learned the method of inflecting the verb. . . .

"The moral qualities of her nature have also developed themselves more clearly. She is remarkably correct in her deportment, and few children of her age evince so much sense of propriety in regard to appearance."

V

1841

LAURA'S JOURNAL — LUCY REED — OLIVER CASWELL — JULIA BRACE — SOPHIA PEABODY'S BUST OF LAURA

TO the robust optimist — the sanest type of man — whatever period of life he may have attained, is the happiest. At eighteen he rejoices in his hardening muscles; at twenty-eight he prides himself on the maturity of his mind; at forty he exults that he is still so ignorant and has withal so keen an appetite for knowledge; at fifty he lives more fully than ever before in the belief that this is the prime of life; at sixty he is thankful for the larger outlook experience has brought him; at seventy a new season begins for him — the Indian summer of life. The cold has not yet come; instead there are mellow days rich with harvest. "Happiest time of all," he tells us, "to him who has sowed the quickening seed in the springtide, and tended it through summer heats and autumn rains." Such a man is always loved by his fellows; his world, whether it be a village community or a whole nation, is grieved to the heart when, the last stage of his life journey over, the Indian summer gives way to winter.

Laura Bridgman was one of these happy optimists, — life was always beautiful to her; but she was a creature

set apart from her kind by reason of her infirmities, and the part of her life which was the most interesting to outsiders was this splendid season of early youth.

She lived at this time with Dr. Howe and his sister in the apartments set aside for the director, and enjoyed his constant companionship. She was like a daughter to him, the pet of all the friends who visited him.

From her own journal and those kept by her teachers, we gain many glimpses of her pleasant surroundings. She was the object of the deepest interest and affection; she was already famous, and though the greatest pains were taken to keep the knowledge of this from her, the interest and affection which flowed out to her from every side contributed directly and indirectly to her enjoyment of life. Her mind was at its most active period; she drank in knowledge thirstily. Every day brought her wonderful new revelations; she lived intensely, and loved her friends fervently.

Her adopted father, her teacher Miss Drew, Miss Jeannette, and Lurena, one of the blind girls, seem to have been foremost in her thoughts at this time. Miss Drew was Laura's companion in the daily walks, which were always so necessary to her health.

Laura's zeal sometimes outran her strength, and it was often necessary to check her search for knowledge. She confesses her weariness one day after a lesson over which she has made an especial effort. "I cannot study more. Think is tired."

The following extract is from the teacher's journal:

"Taught her to learn the multiplication table. She learned the four first columns in course. I examined her in skipping about, and she complained. Said I did not ask her right, I did not know, etc. After convincing her that I was right, she would seem to think deeply, and she asked me if I heard her think.

"She felt the greatest interest in colors, and took an unaccountable dislike to red. She asked if horses were green and blue and pink (knowing that they were not) and laughed heartily at her own question. She felt of a scarf Miss J. wore and asked her where she got her green scarf. At the same time a green and white plaid ribbon was given her and she picked out the green and the white squares."

The only manner in which we can account for this is the extreme delicacy of her touch. She *sometimes* was able to detect the color of a fabric from the surface which the dye had produced. It has been stated that she could tell the difference between colors. This was occasionally the case, but by no means the rule, and was due to the tactile sense alone. That she had any true idea of color we cannot believe; witness her statement that she would like to have pink eyes and blue hair. Her idea of beauty was limited to a perception of texture and form.

The interest which his friends took in his work was a great stimulus to Dr. Howe. We find many letters written at this time both by famous and obscure persons showing the wide-spread sympathy and curiosity roused by his reports. George Combe says in a letter dated May 1, 1841: —

"Your education of Laura Bridgman is very much admired by the British public, and her case is universally attractive. It is spoken of with deep interest and admiration in every society into which I enter.

"I shall be most anxious to hear of your success with your next experiment."

The success which had attended Laura's education induced Dr. Howe to seek out other similarly afflicted persons. He says in his Report for 1841: —

"It has generally been supposed that cases of this dreadful privation are very rare, — not one occurring in many millions of people. . . . Nevertheless three new cases of this kind have been brought to our institution within the past year. The first of these is a girl named Lucy Reed, aged fourteen years, from Vermont."

In a letter to Julius Hamburg, Dr. Howe speaks of this child: —

"You will be delighted to hear that our one-sense girl is improving in a very remarkable manner.

"We have another case; the one mentioned in the note to my account of Laura. She is fourteen years of age and as nearly unnatural as you can well conceive a human being to be. She keeps her head enveloped in a kind of bag; and her parents even have not seen her features for two years. She was on coming here quite wilful and wayward; and would bite and scratch like a cat when thwarted.

"I have so far tamed her as to make her mind me; but she has not comprehended the meaning of our efforts to give her a knowledge of sign language; but I am by no means discouraged.

"Laura, on the other hand, outruns my hopes; she develops humanity in its pure and beautiful form; there is no depravity in her nature: she is to other children what the humble wild flower is to the pampered product of our garden."

Much interesting information concerning Laura is found in the journal kept by her teachers. Miss Drew, the first of these ladies, to whose devotion Laura owed so much, at this time kept a daily record of her lessons and conversation, from which these extracts are taken:

"*June* 28, '41. This P. M. Laura brought me her doll, and told me she had been teaching her to talk with her fingers, and asked me to see her talk. She was quite delighted that I noticed her, and wanted very much that I should talk to the doll with my fingers."

"*July* 24, 1841. While writing today some events in her life when she first entered the institution, she wrote this among other sentences: 'Doctor and Drew taught me to read on a knife and a fork and a mug good.' I said, 'I do not remember that you were taught to read on a mug.' She hesitated a moment and then said 'yes,' but presently laughed very heartily and said, 'I was thinking about Lucy that she did read on mug. I was silly not to think good. . . .'"

"*August* 9, 1841. She said, 'it rains.' Yes. 'Why does it rain?' Rain comes from clouds; clouds are full of water and it falls on the ground. 'Wrong?' No. 'God is very full.' Who told you about God? 'No one, I think about God.'"

"*Sept.* 13th. She said impatiently, 'why does rain come?' To make corn and beans and potatoes and all things grow. 'It does not make me grow.'"

"*Sept.* 22. Held a conversation with Laura this morning about the word *blame:* What is blame? 'Blame is to strike.' No. When you are not pleasant I blame you because you know it is wrong, and I think you are wrong but I do not strike you. 'I blame to strike?' Yes, you are to blame. I blame you because you know it is wrong to strike, and all boys and girls are to blame when they do wrong, because they know it is wrong. 'Little girls took apples.' Where were apples? 'In street, was she wrong?' Yes. Why did she take apples? 'Because she was hungry.' You eat when you are hungry, is it wrong? 'When folks give me.' Why do little girls not get grapes in yard? 'Because they are not little girls' grapes.' Would it be right for little girls to get grapes when doctor and all folks did not know? '*No, it would be very wrong.*' You can get grapes and doctor will not know: would it be right? '*No!*' What is it to take things when folks do not know? 'Wrong.' It is to steal. 'What is steal?' To take things that are not yours. 'What would doctor do if I took grapes?' He would be very sorry, and cry, and say you were wrong to steal. Do you think good girls steal? 'No!' What girls steal? 'Bad. Would blood come in face if I steal?' Yes."

Laura read in the New Testament before she could understand the significance of its teachings, and came with questions, which were difficult for the teachers to answer. Dr. Howe made the rule that all questions on religious topics should be referred to himself. How wisely and simply he taught this little child is to be gathered from his conversation with her on the death of Orrin, one of the blind boys, and from a thousand references to what he has told her in her own

journal. "Dr. says I am to love God," is a frequent statement.

In this year, 1841, Laura began to keep a journal. She wrote in pencil neatly, filling half a page of large foolscap every day. The following extracts have been chosen as giving some insight into her life at this time. The "J" to whom she constantly refers was Miss Jeannette Howe.

Mr. Charles Sumner is spoken of unceremoniously as "Sumner," and Horace Mann as "Mann." Dr. Howe's sister, Mrs. Wales, was very fond of Laura, who often visited her, and Tommy and Joseph are the doctor's nephews, Thomas and Joseph Wales. The only alteration from the original journal is the introduction of capital letters, which at this time she used very little.

"*Thursday.* Cynthia gave me twenty cents and hundred cents yesterday. I went in water Friday. . . . Ladies came to see girls Saturday and I bit Sumner because he squeezed my arm yesterday, he was very wrong."

"*Saturday, June* 19. [Exhibition Day] I wrote to ladies and men. Girls sang in hall. Drew brought letter from Tenney. I saw baby and lady and man and little girl. I and J. and Drew and Swift and Cook walked to get flowers in yard. I was very good to ladies. Dr. brought cow and little calf Wednesday."

"*Thursday.* I taught Lucy [Reed] to say *nut* and *fig* and *cake.* Lucy was good. . . . Dr. cannot walk because he is lame with three legs." [He used a cane.]

"*Monday, July* 13, 1841. Little boy is deaf and dumb and blind. Boy will come to learn to talk with his fingers." [Laura refers to Oliver Caswell, of whom she had heard

but who did not come to the school until the following September.]

"*Friday.* Lucy's mother came to see her, she was very glad, she worked, she brought Lucy things, her sister and father came to see her. Dr. and Drew and Swift cannot teach Lucy [Reed] because she has gone home. Her mother wanted to see Lucy now; I want to see her very much: she must come to learn to talk with fingers. Lucy was very good and still all days. . . ."

"*Thursday.* Drew taught me to count. I washed dishes and made silk gown. J. and Miss Swift went to see Mann, and Dr. went away. I rode with J. and Dr. before supper. Mann came last night with Dr. flies bit horse much.

"Elephant is very high like wall; ladies do sit on him, on him trunk, to make eat and drink. Dr. bought elephant and horse to show girls: tusk is comb. [Comb is made of tusk—i.e. ivory.] Horse cannot reach elephant. Elephant is very large and far he do live."

On the 21st of September, or thereabouts, Miss Sophia Peabody had her first sitting from Laura for the excellent portrait bust, which is still to be seen at South Boston. The first suggestion for this bust was made to Dr. Howe by Horace Mann, in the following characteristic letter. Miss Peabody was at that time betrothed to Nathaniel Hawthorne, to whom she was subsequently married.

July 15, 1841.

DEAR HOWE, — I evaporated from Boston on Saturday last according to contract. As I was musing along on the way, about you and yours, and especially about that Laura Bridgman *whom you invented*, a thought came

to me which I resolved to communicate to you. It is, to have a likeness of Laura taken for your next Report. It would do not a little towards keeping up, and indeed extending the interest, which the public now take in her. . . .

In connection with this, another idea has occurred which regales my benevolence, and I think it will yours, — if it does not, then you will do nothing about it, say nothing to me about it, and so it will fall back to the nonentity from which it came. It is to let Miss Sophia Peabody make a bust or medallion of Laura; you don't know what an artist she is. I think she would do it as well as anybody. . . .

Yours wholly and ever,

HORACE MANN.

Laura was very much excited about Miss Peabody's work, and wanted to know if the bust would wear shades. She said she would ask the sculptor to teach her to make a portrait of her doll when she was tall. The bust is on the whole the most satisfactory likeness of Laura ever made. Many years later, thanks to the generosity of Mrs. Peter C. Brooks, a score or more copies were made from it and were presented to the leading institutions for the blind and for the deaf. One of these was sent to the School for Deaf and Dumb at Hartford. The circumstances of its reception at that institution are given in the following extract from a Hartford paper.

"One circumstance was a most satisfactory tribute to the fidelity of Mrs. Hawthorne's portraiture. It seems that Miss Bridgman had visited this school some four or

five years ago, and was well remembered, of course, by the older pupils. The teacher asked these pupils if the bust looked like any lady they had ever seen. Although Laura now wears glasses instead of the ribbon of her girlhood, and was when these pupils saw her a mature lady of nearly fifty years, two or three identified the girlish form and features promptly; and one of them went to the blackboard and wrote in a beautiful, clear hand the name, 'Laura Bridgman.'"

A portrait in oils was being made of Laura at this time. She was very much interested to know *why* the painter made it, and *how*. In order to explain this to her the artist drew a rough sketch of her head and pricked the outlines of it through the paper so she could feel them. She was much pleased by this.

It was during the summer of this year that Miss Julia Ward, revisited the Mount Washington House, now the Institution for the Blind. The account of this visit is given in her own words.

"I have already said that it was through Mr. Longfellow that I first became acquainted with Charles Sumner. It was from these two friends that I first heard the story of Laura Bridgman, and with it that of Dr. Howe's labors, so wonderfully crowned with success. I happened to be passing the summer of 1841 in a country house not far from Boston, and it was arranged one day that my sisters and I should drive over to the institution at South Boston, and see for ourselves the face into which Dr. Howe had so recently brought the light of intellectual life.

"Mr. Longfellow and Mr. Sumner accompanied us in

this visit. While we were intently engaged in observin Laura's characteristic gestures, Mr. Longfellow, wh stood near a window, exclaimed: 'Here comes Howe o his black charger!' and presently the *preux chevalier* o modern philanthropy was brought to welcome us, wit his shy, but not ungracious greeting."

So it happened that little Laura Bridgman was th means of bringing about the most important even of her best friend's life, for if it had not been for he presence at the institution, it is not likely that Mis Ward would have ever visited it and very possible tha she might never have met Dr. Howe.

On the 30th day of September, Oliver Caswell, th blind, deaf and dumb son of the ferryman at James town, about whose case Dr. Howe had for som time been in correspondence, was brought to th institution.

At this time two school journals were kept, one b Miss Drew and one by Miss Swift. Miss Drew, it wil be remembered, was present at Laura's first lesson She entered thoroughly into the spirit of Dr. Howe' work, and was always a faithful and efficient assistan to him, and a patient and loving teacher to Laura.

In June, 1841, Miss Swift began to devote some hour of every day to Laura's instruction. In Miss Swift' original journal we find the following mention of Olive Caswell: —

"*Sept.* 30, 1841. — Another deaf, dumb, and blind child came from Newport. He appeared delighted with Laura's manner of talking, and imitated it by putting his

hand in ours, and making the same movements. He evidently discovered that she was in the same condition with himself, as when he wished to show her anything, he put it *in* her hand, and to *us* he would hold it up before our eyes. He employed every moment till he went to bed in examining persons and things about him.

"*Oct.* 1. — Dr. Howe gave Oliver his first lesson and he learned to spell book, key, pin, pen, and to distinguish Dr. and Swift when spelled to him. He showed his delight on being taught by laughing heartily after each word in which he was successful.

"Her (Laura's) whole conversation was about Oliver. She was very much troubled that she kissed him, and could not speak of it without blushing very much. She could not understand why it was not as well as for little Maria[1] to kiss Doctor before she went to bed. After talking about it a long time she came to the conclusion that it would be very wrong. 'Doctor would say I was very wrong and will point at me.' I happened to call her a little girl when talking to her, and she said, — "No, I am not little now; new shoes are very thick and make me tall."

The first mention in Laura's journal of Oliver's lesson is made on the very day, Friday, Oct. 1, when Dr. Howe gave him his first lesson. Dr. Howe says: "Profiting by the experience I had gained in other cases, I omitted several steps of the process before employed, and commenced at once with the finger language. Taking, therefore, several articles having short names, such as *key*, *cup*, *mug*, etc., and with

[1] Doctor Howe's niece, Maria Howe, afterwards Mrs. John N. Quackenbush.

Laura for an auxiliary, I sat down, and taking his hand placed it upon one of them, and then with my own made the letters k-e-y. He soon learned to make the letters for *key*, *pen*, *pin*."

"*Friday, Oct.* 1," says Laura's journal, "Dr. and Miss Swift taught Oliver to say pen and pin and key and book."

While Lucy Reed remained at the institution, Laura took the deepest interest in her education, and we find many accounts of her efforts to help her in the school journals. She mourned her departure for many weeks. She was much delighted when she heard that Oliver Caswell was coming and said, "his name is Dummy!" From this time she often mentions Oliver in her journal, and notes the progress made in his education.

It had been arranged that Laura should go to Hanover for the annual vacation. In the following letter to her friend Abby Carter (one of Dr. Howe's first pupils), October 11, she mentions the proposed trip, and gives a very good summary of the most important events at the institution as well as the matters which more immediately concerned herself.

Dear Abby Carter, — How do you do? You must remember to write to me quick. I send love to you. I want to see you very much. I was very sick when it was very warm. Davis taught deaf and dumb and blind little boy to make clove basket good, he will learn to talk with his fingers fast. He did cry because his mother went away. I will go home with Miss Drew to see my mother

and father and brothers soon. I stay with Jeanette good. All days Miss Peabody makes clay heads much. You are very wrong not to write to me. I am sorry. Swift and Drew teach me. Doctor plays with me.

The following extracts from Miss Drew's journal give an account of the journey to New Hampshire: —

"*Oct.* 19. While riding in the cars she asked: 'Does mother know I am in cars and coming to see her?' No. 'Do you think she will want me to stay all days in Hanover and not come more?' Do you want to stay in Hanover and not go back to Boston? 'No, but I want to stay in Hanover three weeks.' Why? 'Because girls stay in homes three weeks.'

"During the ride in the stage after we left the cars, Laura began to grow fatigued and discouraged at the length of the ride. To cheer her spirits I said, I think Doctor will be in Concord tonight. 'Why?' To go with you to Hanover. Do you want him to go to Hanover? 'Little.' Why not very much? 'Because mother will be very busy to work, and cannot talk with him. Doctor must not trouble mother.'

"While sitting with the family at the hotel in Concord in the evening, she said, 'I must not go to bed till ladies go, because I am company.'

"*Oct.* 20. Today a few citizens met in the State House to witness the method of instruction and performances of Laura, and to listen to a few remarks by Dr. H. Owing to the unfavorable weather there were not so many as there would otherwise have been. There seemed to be a great deal of interest manifested. At two P. M. started for New Lebanon, spent the night, and reached Hanover about eleven o'clock A. M.

"*Oct.* 21, *Hanover.* Laura was continually talking about Dr. H. She said, 'I think much about Doctor, I want to see him. I cannot wait till he comes. I am in hurry till Doctor come. Why did he go? Does he know I want to see him very much? I think Doctor does not love me to go away. I must write letter to him.' I asked her what she would write? 'I shall write that he must come to see me quick. I think much about him at all times.' She asked me if I like to stay here all days. I told her no. 'Why?' Because I want to see all folks in Boston. Do you want to stay here and let me go to Boston without you? 'What is without?' To leave you in H. to go alone, to go without you. Shall I go without you? 'No,' very decidedly. 'I must go because clay head is not done, and Peabody waits for me and I want to see J.'"

At the close of the vacation Dr. Howe joined Laura and Miss Drew at Concord, and then proceeded to Hartford with them to make a long promised visit to the asylum for the deaf-mutes.

Ever since Dr. Howe had first seen Julia Brace, the deaf, dumb and blind woman at the Hartford asylum, he had wished to try his methods of instruction upon her.

The following account of the visit to Julia Brace is the best one that has been preserved; it was written for the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, and printed on the 13th of November, 1841.

"I hardly thought to find anything interesting during my short sojourn here about which to write you, but I have done so.

"I was at the school for the deaf and dumb, this morning, when that interesting little creature, Laura Bridgman (who has but one sense — that of touch) arrived from Boston, and made her first visit. She was accompanied by Dr. Howe, Mrs. Sigourney, and some other persons, and her coming seemed to be quite unexpected.

"It is probable that there is hardly another person in the United States whose appearance at the school would create such a sensation among the hundred and fifty inmates. Her name was familiar to all the pupils, who had doubtless marvelled much how a dumb child, deprived also of the sense of sight, by which they themselves learn everything, should be able to learn to read, write, and talk.

"When the news was passed from hand to hand that Laura Bridgman was in the office, the teachers and pupils came thronging around her, and filled the room and passage-way, while all the way up the staircase stood scores of little girls, with sparkling eyes and animated faces, eagerly gesticulating to each other, and conversing rapidly in dumb show.

"It was a beautiful sight to see so much life and happiness among these unfortunates, but the principal attraction was little Laura, who, having taken off her bonnet and cloak, appeared one of the most interesting children you ever saw. Slender and delicately formed, with beautiful features and fair complexion, so graceful were her motions, so animated her gesticulation, and so full of life was her countenance, that but for the green ribbon bound over her sightless orbs, you would have called her one of nature's most gifted children. . . .

"She was very impatient to meet Julia Brace, the only person in the world, perhaps, whose privation of sense approaches in degree to hers, and about whom it seems much had been told her.

"At last Julia was brought down, and the two met, and felt of each other! But what a difference between the two! Julia is a woman grown, and unprepossessing in her appearance, because she is without animation, without vivacity, without any expression of face. She was made to understand, by placing her fingers on Laura's eyes and on her ears, that she was blind and deaf like herself, but her countenance changed not; she manifested little interest, and in a moment or two began to withdraw from the child, who clung to her, put around her neck a chain of her own braiding, and kissed her! Vain impulse of affection! Julia coolly put into her pocket the present which Laura had brought her, and was making off from the child, whose distress now became evident, and who eagerly asked the others: 'Why does she push me, why does she not love me?'

"What a contrast in their characters! Laura wanted her affection and sympathy, and would not be satisfied without them; while Julia, having got her present, was desirous of terminating the interview, and carrying off her possession!

"Such is the effect of education; such the consequence of evolving the moral and social nature, as has been done in the case of Laura; or of exercising only the lower propensities, and allowing the human being to live as do the brutes, within himself and for himself alone! The kind and good people who have charge of Julia Brace seem to do for her all they can do; but this is little, for they have no means of communicating with her."

Laura always remembered her visit to Hartford and the delightful afternoon she passed in company with Dr. Howe and Miss Drew at Mrs. Sigourney's. They were most hospitably received in the pleasant old

homestead, where they stayed to tea and spent the evening, much to Laura's delight. She was the most sociable of girls and enjoyed society as much as any young belle with all her senses.

Toward the end of 1841 Laura's favorite teacher, Miss Drew, left the institution to be married to Dr. Morton. The child, who was deeply attached to her, grieved much at her departure. In speaking of the marriage Laura said, "Drew is Morton now." She had a different sound for every member of the household, and on Miss Drew's change of name she decided it would be improper to call her by her old "noise," and so made a new one for Mrs. Morton.

Shortly after her marriage Mrs. Morton wrote to Laura, signing the letter "Drew," in the old fashion. Laura was much pleased to receive the letter, but commented severely on the signature, saying, "her name is Morton now."

The following letters are interesting as showing the anxiety Dr. Howe felt regarding Laura's religious education. From Dr. Howe to Mr. Beecher, Sept. 21, 1841:

"I shall not offer any apology for my long delay in answering your letter. I shall simply state that I have taken it up, not at my first leisure (for I seldom have any) but in its order among my duties. Your questions respecting Laura Bridgman are very interesting and show that you seize the important points of the case with the grasp of a philosopher; indeed the form of some of the queries show that the answers had suggested themselves to you.

"I have no doubt that the idea of right and wrong occurred to her (to use common language) before any word expressive of it was taught to her. That is to say, her conscientiousness led her to attribute blame to a person who gave her pain purposely: also to an animal which should hurt her, because she attributed to the animal volition, but not to a stone which should fall upon her, because to this she did not attribute volition. . . .

"She did not at first seem to connect with the word 'wrong' when applied to herself, in an action not affecting benevolence, or right of property, anything else than a perception that it caused disappointment in others. That she did, however, attribute wrong to immoral actions of trespass on property, violation of truth, &c., I think is clear. . . .

"There are some manifestations in her case which incline me to admit the existence of a faculty, which may as well be named conscientiousness as anything else, and which certainly aids in the solution of many phenomena exhibited in her case.

"She is perfectly truthful, and until her sense of the ludicrous was developed she was evidently surprised by anything like untruth or exaggeration. She now takes an expression of burlesque or exaggeration, or irony in its right sense. . . ."

In a letter to Mr. Bartlett, New York, Sept. 13, 1841, Dr. Howe writes: —

"I have reflected much on the subject of moral, and religious instruction for Laura, and am inclined to the opinion that I ought not to attempt the latter, that is, purely religious instruction, for some time, and that I should teach morality, not by precept, or abstraction,

but by examples in conduct which she shall imitate, and by relations of actions which shall call into play her sense of right and wrong in the decision. Perhaps I do not make myself understood, for it is a futile attempt to draw a line of demarcation between morality and religion, and say when one begins and the other ends. My idea is that a well constituted human being may be so nurtured and surrounded with good influences as to display all the virtues of morality and religion just as a tree leaves, bears its natural fruits, and all without having any rule of duty laid down, without hearing any promise of reward or threats of punishment. . . .

"My view is, therefore, that in the case of Laura I should not *as yet* attempt anything like conveying to her an idea of the power and attributes of God. With regard to moral rules and precepts, I doubt whether I should attempt them now. . . ."

Laura's progress during the year 1841 is best summarized by Dr. Howe.

"She [Laura] seems, indeed, to advance in a geometrical ratio, for every step which she takes aids her in that which is to follow. She has now become so well acquainted with language that she can comprehend and use all the parts of speech; and, although her vocabulary is still very small, it is so perfectly familiar as to be to her exactly what speech is to others, — the vehicle for thought. She labored for a long time under a difficulty like that experienced by persons learning a foreign language; she had to make an effort to recall the sign with which she was to associate an idea; but now the association is not only spontaneous and immediate, but, as with others, apparently necessary. As, when we see an object, — a

house, or a dog, — we invariably think of the words *house*, *dog* — so everything with which Laura comes in contact is instantly suggestive of its name in her finger language.[1]

"A proof of the spontaneous connection between her thoughts and these arbitrary signs is the fact that, when asleep, and disturbed by dreams, her fingers are at work, and doubtless uttering her thoughts irregularly, as we murmur them indistinctly in broken slumbers. . . .

"I do not doubt that I could have trained Laura to express her thoughts, to a considerable extent, by vocal signs; but it would have been a most rude and imperfect language; it would have been indeed a foolish attempt to do, in a few years, what it took the human race generations and ages to effect.

"Some persons, who are familiar with teaching the deaf mutes, have expressed their opinion that Laura already uses language with greater precision than children who have about the same degree of knowledge, but who are merely deaf and dumb. I believe this is true; and it confirms what I think might be inferred *a priori*; viz., that the finger language should be used as much as possible in teaching the mutes, rather than the natural signs, or pantomime. . .[1]"

"She has had almost uninterrupted health, and has grown in stature and strength. She is now tall of her age, well-proportioned, and very strong and active. The acuteness of her touch, and of the sense of feeling generally, has increased sensibly during the last year. She can perceive when any one touches a piano in the same room with her; she says, '*sound comes through the floor to my feet, and up to my head.*' She recognizes her friends by the slightest touch of their hands, or of their dress. For instance, she never fails to notice when I

[1] Notes, page 375.

have changed my coat, though it be for one of the same cut, color, and cloth; if it is only a little more or less worn than the usual one, she perceives it, and asks, '*why?*' It would appear that in these perceptions she employs not only the sense of touch, but derives great assistance from what Brown would call a sixth sense; viz., the sense of muscular resistance. Aided by both of these, she has acquired surprising facility in ascertaining the situation and relation of things around her. Especially is it curious to see how accurate is her perception of the direction or bearing of objects from her; for by much practice and observation she has attained, to some extent, what the bee and some other insects have in such perfection by instinct, — the power of going straight toward a given point, without any guide or landmark. For instance, when she is told to go from any part of the room to a particular door, or window, she goes directly and confidently on, not groping, or feeling the walls; she stops at the right instant, raises her hand in the right direction, and places it upon the door-knob, or whatever point she may have aimed at. Of course it is not supposed that she can exercise this power when she is in a new place, but she has attained great facility in ascertaining her actual position in regard to external things. . . .

"I have tried to excite the dormant senses, or to create impressions upon the brain, which resemble sensations, by electricity and galvanism, but with only partial success. When a galvanic circuit is made by pressing one piece of metal against the mucous membrane of the nose, and another against the tongue, the nerves of taste are affected, and she says it is like medicine.

"In the development of her intellectual powers, and in the acquisition of knowledge, not only of language, but

of external things and their relations, I think she has made great progress. The principal labor has, of course, been upon the mere vehicle of thought, — language. . . .

"The development of her moral nature during the past year has been such as her previous sweetness of temper, benevolence, and truthfulness led me to expect. The different traits of character have unfolded themselves successively, as pure and spotless as the petals of a rose; and in every action unbiased by extraneous influences she 'gravitates toward the right' as naturally as a stone falls to the ground. Two or three instances are recorded in her teacher's journal of apparent unkindness on Laura's part to other children, and one instance of some ill-temper to a grown person; but so contradictory are they to the whole tenor of her character and conduct that I must infer either a misunderstanding of her motives by others, or ill-judged conduct on their part. . . .

"During the past year she has shown very great inquisitiveness in relation to the origin of things. She knows that men made houses, furniture, etc., but of her own accord seems to infer that they did not make themselves, or natural objects. She therefore asks: '*Who made dogs, horses, and sheep?*' She has got from books, and perhaps from other children, the word *God*, but has formed no definite idea on the subject. Not long since, when her teacher was explaining the structure of a house, she was puzzled to know '*how masons piled up bricks before floor was made to stand on.*' When this was explained, she asked: '*When did masons make Jannette's parlor; before all Gods made all folks?*'

"I am now occupied in devising various ways of giving her an idea of immaterial power by means of the attraction of magnets, the pushing of vegetation, etc., and

intend attempting to convey to her some adequate idea of the great Creator and Ruler of all things.

"I am fully aware of the immeasurable importance of the subject, and of my own inadequacy; I am aware, too, that, pursue what course I may, I shall incur more of human censure than of approbation; but, incited by the warmest affection for the child, and guided by the best exercise of the humble abilities which God has given me, I shall go on in the attempt to give her a faint idea of the power and love of that Being whose praise she is every day so clearly proclaiming, by her glad enjoyment of the existence which he has given her."

VI

1841-1842

VISIT OF CHARLES DICKENS — JULIA BRACE — LAURA'S JOURNALS — TEACHERS' JOURNALS

THE careful records which Dr. Howe caused to be kept of Laura's conversations with himself and his assistants are full of questions and comments profoundly interesting from a psychological standpoint. The keenness of the child's strong, active mind is evinced everywhere. She surprised him continually by the hardihood and astuteness shown in her mental processes. Again and again he found that after leading her two or three steps down some new path of knowledge, in which she clung closely to him, asking so many questions that their answering sometimes required the patience of a saint, he was rewarded by finding a little later that, the first steps having been fairly taken, she bounded along unaided to some conclusion lying a long way off.

At this time Laura was taught by Miss Rogers and Miss Swift, each of whom kept a school journal. From these chronicles the following summary and extracts are made: —

Laura has received her first idea of comparisons. Formerly she knew but two degrees, as *large* and *very*

large; she is much pleased to learn large and larger, and proceeds to coin some new words, as "mucher," etc. Her trials over her arithmetic cannot fail to arouse the sympathy of all who have found the treading of the third R's path to knowledge as difficult as she did. All her other studies are a pure delight. She is never impatient about her geography, or her reading; but her arithmetic is the source of many small trials. The school journals are full of allusions to these difficulties which she so patiently toiled over. She spends a long time in putting down the number 1001 with her types. The multiplication table was to her a most irksome study; but she finally conquered it. Like other children she made great objections to the process called "skipping about," and often told her teacher that she gave the questions wrong. It is one thing to say the tables through, but to be suddenly confronted with nine times eight, when one has been smoothly gliding along the *five* table, is sometimes more than flesh and blood can endure.

Subtraction was her next trial. She learned to take away a small number from a large one easily enough, as two from eight; but when it came to taking eight from five and borrowing ten to make the transaction possible, *that* was a very difficult matter.

A letter written to her teacher's sister at this time, shows the progress she has made in expressing herself.

Nov. 28, '41.

DEAR SWIFT'S CATHERINE, — How do you do? I am well. I want to see you very much. Miss J. and Dr. are

very well. You must write letter to me. I was sick in head and throat. I send much love to you. Miss Rogers teaches me. Miss Swift is very well. Lurena was very much sick. Miss Drew is Mrs. Morton now: she cannot teach me. Oliver can talk very fast. Dr. taught him to learn good. Lurena will be very well soon. Dr. teaches me all days. All girls are very well. Miss Swift do not teach me. I send much kiss to you.

LAURA BRIDGMAN.

The daily routine of the school life was pleasantly interrupted by visitors from different parts of the world. One day six gentlemen, members of the city government of Albany, visited the school; another day the ill-starred Dr. Webster and the surgeon of the *Columbia* were shown over the institution.

One morning Laura was found standing beside a table with a book before her, talking rapidly to herself. She seemed to be much excited and suddenly shut the book, which proved to be a copy of *Viri Romæ* in the raised type. She could not understand the words, and was greatly agitated, calling it a bad book. This seems to have been her first meeting with the fact that there were other languages in the world besides English, but she quickly grasped the idea that other men in different countries spoke different words. Life was a continual surprise to her, and she was as constant a surprise to her teachers.

She was always fond of flowers, and in speaking of a rose, she said she thought the rose had feeling and was hurt when she felt it hard. She was puzzled to

learn that while it hurts an animal to pull its hair, it does not hurt it to have the hair cut.

In the last part of 1841 Dr. Howe was absent for some weeks. He took several of his pupils and visited South Carolina, with the object of rousing public interest in the cause of the blind, and founding schools for their education. During his absence Laura was very impatient for his return, and very curious to learn all the details of the work in which he was engaged.

It was on the 29th day of January, Dr. Howe still being at the South, that Charles Dickens visited the institution, accompanied by Mrs. Dickens and Charles Sumner. The event is recorded in the journals of both of the teachers, as well as in Laura's own diary.

In Miss Swift's journal the entry reads: —

"*Jan.* 29, 1842. At noon Mr. Sumner, Mr. Dickens and lady, came out, and Mr. Dickens seemed very much pleased with Laura. She was very still, and did not appear at all as usual while in the schoolroom, but they followed her into the parlor and there she was quite playful. He could hardly believe the evidence of his senses, and was much more surprised than people usually are."

Miss Rogers makes a brief mention of the event: —

"At ten we had no regular schools; most of the girls were preparing to receive Mr. Dickens, who was expected, and as no one else in the house could be found to do it, I dusted the schoolroom and put it in order. Repaired to the girls' schoolroom to entertain Mr. Dickens, but he did not deign to notice anything or anybody except Laura, who was there under Miss Swift's care."

Laura herself writes: —

"Rogers taught me to cypher. She taught Oliver to talk about words. Swift taught me to talk about boat ship. Ladies and gentleman came to see girls. Swift and Rogers went to Roxbury. This afternoon Miss J. went to ride. Osburne to ship boat much."

The visit briefly noted by three inmates of the institution is thus described by Dickens in his *American Notes*: —

"The thought occurred to me as I sat down in another room, before a girl blind, deaf, and dumb, destitute of smell, and nearly so of taste; before a fair young creature with every human faculty, and hope, and power of goodness and affection, inclosed within her delicate frame, and but one outward sense — the sense of touch. There she was, before me; built up, as it were, in a marble cell, impervious to any ray of light or particle of sound; with her poor white hand peeping through a chink in the wall, beckoning to some good man for help, that an immortal soul might be awakened.

"Long before I looked upon her the help had come. Her face was radiant with intelligence and pleasure. Her hair, braided by her own hands, was bound about a head whose intellectual capacity and development were beautifully expressed in its graceful outline and its broad, open brow; her dress, arranged by herself, was a pattern of neatness and simplicity; the work she had knitted lay beside her; her writing-book was on the desk she leaned upon. From the mournful ruin of such bereavement there had slowly risen up this gentle, tender, guileless, grateful-hearted being. Like other inmates of that house, she had a green ribbon bound around her

eyelids. A doll she had dressed lay near upon the ground. I took it up, and saw that she had made a green fillet such as she wore herself, and fastened it about its mimic eyes.

"She was seated in a little enclosure, made by school desks and forms, writing her daily journal. But soon finishing this pursuit, she engaged in an animated communication with a teacher who sat beside her. This was a favorite mistress with the poor pupil. If she could see the face of her fair instructress, she would not love her less, I am sure.

"I have extracted a few disjointed fragments of her history from an account written by that one man who has made her what she is. It is a very beautiful and touching narrative; and I wish I could present it entire."

[Here follow extracts from Dr. Howe's Reports, which have already been given.]

"Such are a few fragments from the simple but most interesting and instructive history of Laura Bridgman. The name of her great benefactor and friend who writes it is Dr. Howe. There are not many persons, I hope and believe, who, after reading these passages, can ever hear that name with indifference."

The school journal of this year contains much of great interest concerning Laura's progress.

Her hunger and thirst for knowledge were insatiable. Every day, every hour, brought up new subjects of interest. In walking with her teacher she constantly found new subjects for conversation. One day it is a man with a wheel-barrow full of clams; the barrow and

its contents are both new to her, and the explanation of the use of the one and the habits of the other occupy part of the day's lesson.

Another day she walks down to City Point and examines some boats lying on the shore; this leads to a talk about the manner of propelling the boat, the action of the wind, the catching of fish, and so forth.

A lesson on fire greatly interested her. At an early age she had been met with the contradictions of that element which most makes and mars our comfort. In the old kitchen in Hanover she used to delight in sitting near the large fireplace warming herself and playing with the cat; but she burnt herself on one occasion, and on another threw the cat into the fire.

Her idea of the power of her beloved doctor was, naturally enough, greatly exaggerated. In the little world in which she lived he was the supreme power, the last court of appeal, and in the larger realm of her active, hungry thought, his figure dominated all things spiritual and material. When a number of the Massachusetts representatives came to see the school, she asked them if they brought their rules to doctor to see if they were right. In all cases of disobedience her teachers found that the infallible method of bringing her to reason, was to say, "Doctor would not like" this or that act of insubordination. On one occasion she says, "I want to see God; I want Doctor to make me see."

Her interest in animals never flagged. She learned much about their habits and never forgot what she was

told about them, — at one time animals seemed to interest her to the exclusion of almost every other topic. Foxes, monkeys, sheep, cows, horses, flies, and goats she was never weary of talking about.

Oliver Caswell at this period shared some of Laura's lessons, and she helped him very materially in learning to write. The first word he succeeded in writing was "Laura."

In April, 1842, Julia Brace came to make the proposed visit to the institution. She was at that time thirty-five years old, too old, it was feared, to profit greatly by the methods, which had been so successful in the cases of Laura and Oliver.

In commenting upon her case Dr. Howe says: —

"There is about her inexpressive face, and her attitude and demeanor, a certain passivity denoting habitual inattention to external objects, which is a very unfavorable symptom, and which contrasts strongly with the appearance of Laura Bridgman and Oliver Caswell; they are always on the alert; their spirits seem to be striving to get abroad, — to go out and examine the relations of external things; while Julia's is content to sit within, and receive impressions made upon the surface of her body. When left alone she loses consciousness, and lies flat upon her face, sleeping or dozing for hours together. . . .

"Besides, she is past the age which nature destines for acquiring and storing up knowledge. Few people learn much after they are thirty-five; they continue to grow wiser, but it is mainly by reflecting upon and digesting what they have learned by 'chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy.' Not only must people reap in age as

they have sown in youth, but if they have not sown at all, neither can they reap. I fear that the time has gone by for the active operation of Julia's mental faculties; nor is this the worst; for the social and moral affections are subject to the same law of exercise as the intellectual powers; and as they were neglected in youth, they cannot yield their harvest of love in age. She has begun the work of learning the arbitrary names of things as a substitute for the vague signs by which she now expresses herself so imperfectly. She has already overcome the main difficulty, and conceived the relation between objects and their names; she has even learned the letters composing the names of half a dozen objects. What I fear is, that the present interest which she manifests arises from the novelty of the subject, and will not continue long enough to secure permanent good effects. Numerous, however, as are the odds against a successful issue, the stake is so precious and important a one that a hearty and persevering attempt should be made, and will be made, to win it."

In the teacher's journal are these records of Laura's moral progress: —

"*May* 23*d*, 1842. I fear that Laura attempted to deceive me today in her work. I sent her at ten to knit — she was to commence a pitcher and I told her I wanted she should do much. At twelve I went to give her a lesson and asked her how much she had done. She said, 'I have done handle and neck;' afterwards, 'and *almost* neck.' I asked her to let me see it; she hesitated a moment, then got it — when instead of its being *almost* done, it was not yet entirely begun. Told her I would not give her a lesson again today, but she must think

much about deceiving and work very hard. She did not seem to be moved at all by this, but worked very steadily. Thought it best to leave her till tomorrow, when she may feel differently."

"*May 24th*, 1842. . . . Laura was entirely engaged with the wrong of yesterday. She asked me if she was wrong many times, she then repeated herself the history of her deception, and said 'I felt very bad yesterday, bad is sad.' Asked her if she liked to feel so. 'No, because I want to learn to be good.' Asked her if she thought she should be sad if she learned to be good. She said, 'I do not think.' After sitting some time and thinking about it she said, 'I want you to love me many times much,' and burst into tears. It was some time before she became composed, but after that she was as gentle as possible. . . . "

Her progress for this year is best summed up by Dr. Howe:—

"Laura's health has been excellent during the year, uninterrupted indeed by a single day's illness. Several medical gentlemen have expressed their fears that the continual mental excitement, which she manifests, and the restless activity of her mind must affect her health, and perhaps endanger the soundness of her mental faculties; but any such tendency has been effectually counteracted by causing her to practise calisthenic exercises, and to take long walks daily in the open air, which on some days extend to six miles. Besides, she has a safeguard in the nature of her emotions, which are always joyful, always pleasant and hopeful; and there is no doubt that the glad flow of spirits which she constantly enjoys contributes not only to her physical health, but to the development of her mind. . . ."

"Laura generally appears, by the quickness of her motions and the eagerness of her gestures, to be in a state of mind which in another would be called unnatural excitement. The signs by which she expresses her ideas are slow and tedious; her thoughts outstrip their tardy vehicle, and fly forward to the goal; she evidently feels desirous of talking faster than she can, and she loves best to converse with those who can interpret the motions of her fingers when they are so rapid as to be unintelligible to a common eye. But, with all this activity of the mental machinery, there is none of the wear and tear produced by the grit of discontent; everything is made smooth by the oil of gladness.

"She has commenced the study of geography during the past year, and made fair progress. Having first acquired an idea of the points of the compass, and taken some preliminary lessons by bounding her schoolroom, the chambers, entries, etc., and then going out into the premises bounding the house and yard, she was put to a map. . . .

"It has been remarked that it was very difficult in the beginning to make her understand figures of speech, fables, or supposititious cases of any kind, and this difficulty is not yet entirely overcome. If any sum in arithmetic is given to her, the first impression is, that what is supposed did actually happen. For instance, a few mornings ago, when her teacher took an arithmetic to read a sum, she asked: '*How did the man who wrote that book know I was here?*' The sum given her was this: 'If you can buy a barrel of cider for four dollars, how much can you buy for one dollar?' upon which her first comment was, '*I cannot give much for cider, because it is very sour.*'

"She formerly talked as little children do, without

using pronouns, but now she uses them freely; and her appreciation of them is proved by the fact that, in talking with little Oliver, who is still in the very rudiments of language, she uses the third person, and says, for instance, '*Laura is rich,*' when to another she would say, '*I am rich.*'

"She has a keen relish for knowledge, which mingled with a little self-esteem would perhaps impel her to greater effort than would be consistent with health, if care were not taken to prevent it. . . .

"Words are to her always signs of something definite, and are taken in their literal sense; for instance, she supposed for some time, after hearing about the generic word *smith*, that blacksmiths were all *black* men, and silversmiths *white* men. Like other blind persons, she forms an idea (vague, of course) about colors; she thinks that black is a dirty color, and that the ground is black; another says that black is rough, while white is smooth, etc. . . .

"It is a remarkable and most gratifying fact, that she adopts and follows with greater readiness and facility any regulation founded upon what may be called natural minor morals, than one based upon mere arbitrary, social conventionalism. She does not forget or violate any rule of conduct in which the feelings or rights of others are concerned; indeed, she hardly seems to need them; but she is apt to forget such a rule as that one should not rise from the table until others have done eating. Being once told, two years ago, that it was disagreeable to others to have her blow her nose at table, she has never violated the request since, but invariably gets up, and leaves the room for that purpose; while such a rule as that of using a fork instead of a knife, or of shaking hands with a person, would have to be repeated many times over.

"As to cleanliness, modesty, sobriety, etc., she needs no instruction; she is always clean in person, and neat in dress; and the slightest exposure will call the blush to her cheek. . . .

"The various attempts which I have made during the year to lead her thoughts to God and spiritual affairs have been, for the most part, forced upon me by her questions, which I am sure were prompted by expressions dropped carelessly by others; as God, heaven, soul, etc., and about which she would afterwards ask me. Whenever I have deliberately entered upon them, I have done so with caution, and always felt obliged, by a sense of duty to the child, to make the conversations as short as possible. The most painful part of one's duty is often where an honest conviction forces one to pursue a line of conduct diametrically opposite to that recommended by those for whose superior talents and wisdom one has the greatest respect. It is said continually that this child should be instructed in the doctrines of revealed religion; and some even seem to imagine her eternal welfare will be perilled by her remaining in ignorance of religious truths. I am aware of the high responsibility of the charge of a soul; and the mother who bore her can hardly feel a deeper interest in Laura's welfare than I do; but that very sense of responsibility to God, and that love which I bear to the child, forces me, after seeking for all light from others, finally to rely upon my own judgment. It is not to be doubted that she could be taught any dogma or creed, and be made to give as edifying answers as are recorded of many other wonderful children, to questions on spiritual subjects. But, as I can see no necessary connection between a moral and religious life and the intellectual perception of a particular truth, or belief in a particular creed, I see not

why I should anticipate what seems to me the course of nature in developing the mental powers. Unaided by any precedent for this case, one can look only to the book of nature; and that seems to teach that we should prepare the soul for loving and worshipping God by developing its powers, and making it acquainted with his wonderful and benevolent works, before we lay down rules of blind obedience. . . .[1]"

[1] Notes, page 376.

VII

1843

A SPECIAL TEACHER EMPLOYED FOR LAURA — THE MEANING OF LANGUAGE TO THE DEAF AND BLIND.

TO those who know the Perkins Institution as it is now, an establishment with adequate resources, and an assured hold upon the public favor, it is perhaps difficult to realize how different was its condition in these early days of its existence, and what care the director was obliged to exercise in husbanding its finances.

As we have already seen, Dr. Howe combined in his own person the offices of director, teacher, book-keeper and compiler of school-books, but not, it need scarcely be said, the salaries of the three latter offices.

At length the necessary funds for paying a special teacher for Laura were subscribed by a number of philanthropic persons. Mr. George Combe assisted in the enterprise. Miss Mary Swift, afterwards Mrs. Lamson, was appointed to fill the position.

According to the new arrangement, Laura's day was thus divided: from 6:15 to 7 A. M., arithmetic; 7:00, breakfast, arranging her room, and assisting Miss Jeannette in household duties until 9; at 9 an hour was devoted to conversation; at 10:00 came geography;

at 11:00 writing; at 12:00 some book was read to her, and Laura conversed with her teacher about it; at 1:00 P. M. she sewed or knitted; and at 2:00 she joined the other blind girls in calisthenic exercises, which lasted until her dinner time. After dinner came a long walk, and then knitting kept her busy until six o'clock.

Dr. Howe believed firmly in brief and frequent periods of recreation, especially for children of feeble vitality, as the blind so often are. He made a rule that his pupils should exercise in the open air ten minutes out of every hour, the remaining fifty minutes being spent in study or work.

This wise regulation still prevails, and as the bells ring out the hour, the playgrounds and piazzas are suddenly filled with a swarm of romping boys or laughing girls — the teachers pacing gravely up and down the sheltered galleries; for they, too, need a rest before again taking up their labors.

The new schedule of work was explained to Laura the day when it went into operation. She was pleased with the arrangement and "entered into it with enthusiasm." The only feature to which she objected was the two hours of the afternoon assigned to needle-work. These she would have preferred to devote to play. But it was the knitting or sewing, and not the studies, to which she demurred. The long afternoon walks were not periods of entire relaxation for her teacher, since Laura's busy fingers were constantly questioning her companion as they went along.

Laura's teachers were devoted women. They could scarcely have endured the mental strain and fatigue of being so constantly with her, had not a sincere interest in her welfare, as well as devotion to duty, sustained their strength and spirits.

Laura enjoyed the study of geography, and we find her eagerly anticipating the time when she should begin to learn about a new continent or country. With arithmetic, the case was different. Here her faculties were thrown back upon themselves; instead of learning facts about the world around her, she merely exercised her thinking powers, with a series of mental gymnastics, the object of which she was too young to appreciate. When her lessons in arithmetic brought her added knowledge of the affairs of real life, as they were made to do whenever it was possible, she enjoyed them.

She began the study of geography in the ordinary way, with the four points of the compass. But instead of attacking the map of the whole world at the first onslaught, as so many unfortunate young people are obliged to do, she was led by easy natural steps from the lesser to the greater, from the part to the whole.

The process is thus described by Dr. Howe: —

"Laura was first taught the points of the compass in a room, then the boundaries of the room. She next learned the geography of the house, and of the grounds on which it is situated. Having advanced thus far, the effort was made, and with success, to present to her mind an accurate idea of points of land, capes, bays, harbors, and

rivers, by taking her to walk in places near them. A further step was made when she became acquainted with the boundaries of South Boston, after which she was permitted to learn the boundaries of the city proper by crossing its bridges.

"Gradually and slowly was she taught the geography of one town after another, till she became acquainted with all of any note in the state of Massachusetts, as indicated on the map. She is now able to bound all the states in the Union; can tell their principal towns, the rivers, their rise, course and termination, the productions, the natural curiosities, and much of the natural history of each state, in a manner more correct than most seeing children of her own age, or older. Her knowledge of geography is not limited to the United States. She has studied that of North and South America, and her knowledge of the whole of the American continent is far more extensive and correct than is possessed by many who are called educated persons."

The different and sometimes opposite meanings of the same words were naturally a great source of trouble to her. In explaining a new word, her teacher made the definition a simple one, in order that she might not become confused. Hence when she afterward met the same word — or the same combination of letters — used in a different sense, she was puzzled.

When Miss Swift first began to teach her about boundaries, she asked Laura to define the meaning of *bound*. The little girl took a piece of india-rubber and throwing it on the desk said, "It is little elastic, and bounds."

Laura took her turn in catechising her teacher. She asked the latter if she had ever seen a pond. Laura then gave a description of one, and of a river, saying that her old friend Tenney had taught her about the river before she came to the institution, and that "she threw stones into it." As she then possessed no language, and her friends communicated with her only by means of a few simple signs, one must conclude that she could have learned little about a river, save the fact that it was running water.

Her teacher spent an hour in endeavoring to give Laura a clear idea of an island. The ordinary definition, "a piece of land entirely surrounded by water," is certainly an inadequate one, and Laura's questions reduced it to an absurdity.

"If water was *all round* us, what could we do?" she asked, not with any intention of picking flaws, but because the matter was not clear to her mind. Her teacher answered: "We could build a house on the island and live there." "I think it would be very cold," was her reply. Next day her teacher again talked with her about islands, and found that Laura had gained some idea of their nature. She said, jestingly, "my eyes are very full of tears; are they islands?"

Although she usually enjoyed her geography lessons, she had her days of difficulty and discouragement. A few months later, while Dr. Howe was in Europe, Laura was studying and apparently very happy, when she took both hands from the map and with a look of

despair, said, "Are you not very tired of living so many years?"

Her teacher replied, "no — are you?"

"Yes; I want to go to God in heaven; do not you?"

"When God is ready for me," was the answer. "God will not want me if I am not gentle and kind."

Her teacher's explanation of this curious scene is that Laura was overwhelmed by the immensity of the field of knowledge of which she had obtained a momentary glimpse. The journal shows that Miss Swift had been teaching her about the difference in time in different places, by means of pins stuck into a ball, and that Laura had thus learned to calculate what o'clock it would be in London, the time in Boston being given. Miss Swift writes, "I think that after one or two more lessons she will understand it." Perhaps the young teacher had yielded too far to the wishes of her ambitious pupil, and Laura had received the strong meat for which her mind was not yet prepared.

The following extracts from her teacher's journal show some of the steps in Laura's geography lessons: —

"*April 22nd.* Laura surprised me more than ever by learning the names and situation of Lake Champlain, and four rivers emptying into it, and of about ten towns in Vermont; and that when I had only spelled them *once* to her. She found them all two or three times, and when she had completed the lesson she said: 'Did I not learn good today?'"

"*July* 11*th*. The geography lesson was a review of Georgia and Alabama. When I taught her the boundaries and spelled Mississippi she said, 'I think that is a very silly name,' and laughed heartily at the number of double letters and i's in it. She disliked the word Alabama also."

"*August* 23*rd*. Talked with her about Niagara Falls. She imagined from what I had told her before that the stones *fell*. I now explained to her about the water falling, and I think she understands it. Told her about the noise that it made. She said, 'can you hear it?' 'No.' 'Try very hard and see.' She held my hands very still for me to listen."

"*September* 13*th*. Among the number of visitors were two gentlemen who had walked from North Carolina. She was very much interested and talked a great deal about them. One of them gave her a piece of a stalactite from Wiers Cave, Virginia. It pleased her very much, as I had told her of it when she was studying about Virginia."

Dr. Howe thought it very desirable that children should study geography from the globe as much as possible, in order that they might form a clear conception of the true shape of the earth. He held that maps, with their flat surfaces, convey to the childish mind the impression that the surface of the earth is flat also, instead of convex, an idea which is difficult to correct.[1] Arguing thus, he had a large globe, thirteen feet and

[1] When Captain Joshua Slocum spoke to President Kruger about his voyage round the world in his sloop, the "Spray," Oom Paul — who held that the world is flat — gravely corrected him: "You mean across the world."

ten inches in circumference, constructed for the use of the blind. (This globe may still be seen in the rotunda of the Perkins Institution.)

In December, 1843, Laura took her first lesson on the globe, showing great intelligence and quickness in adapting herself to the new form.

"I supposed that the convex surface would trouble her," says the school journal, "and the raised lines were also different from those to which she was accustomed on the maps, but she was pleased when told she should have the rest of her lesson upon it. I placed her hand on the Russian possessions in North America, and moved it to Mexico, to give her an idea of the scale of distance. I then asked her to find the Gulf of Mexico, Hudson's Bay, etc., which she did at once, and indeed she found every place I called for, even to Boston. The blind children have never been able to do much on this globe in the first day's lesson, and I looked on with astonishment to see her fingers move so rapidly, scarce touching anything apparently but the spot called for."

During this year Laura learned a little elementary astronomy in connection with her geography lessons. When first told of the great size of the sun, and of its distance from the earth, she asked whether one could go there; she thought people might go in boats or cars, but on being asked whether there was water or land all the way, she said, "no," and was quite puzzled as to what method it would be best to adopt in order to reach the sun.

Her teacher spoke of the stars, and explained why

they appear so small to us. Laura thus received a new idea. She had not before known about perspective. In the course of this same first lesson, Miss Swift was led by the eagerness of her pupil into trying to teach her too much at one time. A raised plate of the solar system lay before them, and Laura was told what the circles on the plate indicated, namely, the paths of the planets around the sun. But the motion of the earth had hitherto been unknown to her. "I asked her if she knew the earth moved. She said, 'no,' and *sat as if astonished.*"

Her teacher told her that it took the earth three hundred and sixty-five days to go around the sun; whereupon Laura said, "I think, then, Louisa's father (Capt. Harding) went to the sun; he is gone three years." Her teacher then saw that it would be necessary to proceed much more slowly.

On resuming her lessons next day she asked whether there were any people in the sun. It was explained to her that we could not know, and she then fell back on a thought which seems to have been a common one with her, and said, "We can ask God when we go to Heaven," adding, "can I see when I go to Heaven, to see the sun?"

During this second lesson the constant motion of the earth was explained to her, and also the reason why we are not aware of this motion. Laura's answer was, "when I am very dizzy then I feel the floor go round."

Soon after, she had a lesson upon the tellurion. "She told very readily about night and day upon it,

and the time at the different quarters of the globe. At first she could not seem to realize that some people were then sleeping. She noticed the earth's revolution on its own axis and also about the sun, and told the effects produced by each."

A day or two after, September 12, it is recorded: "She now knows the names of the planets and the length of their years, and she spent some time to-day in making calculations about how old she would be if she lived in the different planets. Herschel amused her most, especially when she calculated how few years old Dr. Howe would be if he had lived there."

On March 17, 1843, she began the study of *Colburn's Mental Arithmetic*, laying aside for a time her ciphering-board. Her progress in this seems very remarkable, for on March 27 of the following year, she finished the book, although some additional time was spent in reviewing the most difficult examples.

She learned the measures by means of object lessons, which interested and amused her, and also showed her the practical use and value of the system.

"*February* 16*th*. . . . Taught her dry measure to-day," says the school journal. "Took a half-peck of beans and a half-pint measure, and then told her how many gills there were in it; as she measured the cupfuls she told how many gills and pints, and then quarts, pints, and gills, until she had measured the half-peck. After a very little practice she could tell how many pints and gills in a peck, bushel, etc., very quickly."

A visit to the store-room Laura found intensely interesting, as other children have done, before and since her time, though not altogether for the same reasons. The ordinary child seeks to appease its physical hunger when it visits an apartment of this description, whereas Laura's cravings were intellectual. But to any child, the institution store-room is a place of a certain mysterious interest. The vast quantities of eatables of all sorts, arrayed in orderly piles, in that large, cool, dark room, with its brick floor, suggest the harvests and feasts of giants; while the big bins of sugar seem like some fabled horde of inexhaustible sweetness.

Laura was at first inclined to confuse bushels and gallons, probably because she learned the two tables at the same time; but in her own journal, written a few days after her visit to the store-room, she has given a very clear account of these tables of measures: —

"*twenty third day of February.* four gills make one pint two pints make a quart eight quarts make a peck four pecks make a bushel to measure with dry things. Four quarts make one gallon thirty one and half gallons make a barrel forty two gallons make a tierce and sixty three gallons make a hogshead wine measure is to measure [the word *liquids* is added in her teacher's hand] i went to ride on the sled down hill wednesday."

As an instance of the difficulties to be met in giving Laura full and clear ideas, it may be mentioned that at a later date, and when she had already done examples in which gallons occurred, she was puzzled by the

following question: "There is a vessel containing eighty-seven gallons, and by a cock ten gallons run into it in an hour; in how many hours will it be filled?" Laura said, "how can gallons run?" thus evidently confusing in her mind the measure and its contents.

Her teacher's diary continues: "But when I added 'of wine or water' she understood it."

This anecdote illustrates both the literalness and quickness of her mind. Apparently the word *gallon*, used alone, conveyed to her only the idea of the wooden or tin measure itself, but the moment the limiting phrase "of wine or water" was added, she understood that the word was used to denote a certain quantity of liquid; she at once made the necessary generalization.

Laura learned cloth measure in the same practical way, namely, by measuring the length of various objects around her. This suggested to her to measure the length of her fingers, and she was quite troubled to find that they were not of uniform length.

Laura learned also the table of time, but with certain sums involving questions of time she had much difficulty, as children usually do with examples of this sort.

Before learning the table of time, she seems to have imagined that her teacher knew what o'clock it was, by actually counting the minutes as they elapsed. In the school journal the following entry occurs on February 22: "In walking to Boston yesterday she said, 'why can not I count in my head as you can?' I

told her she *could*. 'No, I think I can not,' she said; 'you can tell how many minutes in an hour.' Told her I was told how many and remembered, and so could she. 'I thought you counted when it was an hour; you *know* when it is an hour.' Told her I knew when by the clock, and she seemed to be quite satisfied with her own powers."

Laura disliked being asked to explain the examples which she performed in mental arithmetic, and asked why this was necessary, when she had never done so before. In other words, she showed that same innate tendency toward conservatism, toward following a set precedent, which is to be observed in children at an early age, a tendency which shows clearly that man is by nature a law-abiding, as well as a law-creating animal.

It was difficult for her to understand fractions, and a lesson on halves occupied a whole hour. Her teacher hoped that Laura would master the next step, thirds, very readily, but this did not prove to be the case. She was troubled to think that she did not accomplish more, and her teacher consoled her by the assurance that these questions were more difficult than those which had preceded them.

In studying fractions, sight is surely a very great assistance, and the absence of it a correspondingly great drawback. Laura's difficulty in understanding the nature of halves and thirds occurred during the last days of March. On the 9th of August, we find it recorded that she did forty sums in reducing mixed

numbers to improper fractions. The next day she was called upon to reverse the operation, namely to reduce improper fractions to mixed numbers, and could not at first understand it. After making several efforts to do so, she said, "I cannot know what book means." On the third day she conquered the difficulty, and said "she thought she was very dull not to know before." A few days afterward we find that she had advanced to the multiplication of mixed numbers. All these operations were done "in her head," without the aid of pencil, slate, or paper.

During 1843 the study of language continued to occupy a large portion of Laura's time. The reason of this is evident. Owing to her abnormal condition, she had been unable to acquire it gradually, in the natural way, as the little child does.

We find that during this year she made rapid progress, and was able at its close to acquire a dozen new words where formerly she learned only one. "These words are not merely the names of tangible and sensible objects," says Dr. Howe, "but even words obscure in their meaning. One method pursued by her teacher has been to read a story to her, in the course of which new words would occur; these were carefully explained, and on the next day Laura has been able to tell the story in her own language, frequently using the words explained, and in proper connection."

Conversation with her teacher continued to be one of the important features of her education. The daily writing in her journal was another, and the writing

letters to her friends constituted a third. She enjoyed corresponding with the latter, although the physical process of writing was rather irksome to her, and she experienced more difficulty in learning to write well than many of the blind.

When we consider the tediousness of this process as performed by persons deprived of sight, it is evident why Laura, with her nervous, active temperament, disliked it. Nevertheless, she persevered in this, as in her other undertakings, and the large number of her writings which remain, letters, diaries, reminiscences, and a few so-called poems, are additional proofs of her industry and energy. In her journal she often notes the various little events in the miniature world of the institution, as they come to her knowledge. Many of the entries consist of transcripts of stories of various sorts.

Something was always to be learned from these little histories. Often they inculcated a lesson in morals or in the daily conduct of life. Thus we find in her journal stories of girls whose officiousness hindered, where they meant to help, their mothers, of careless children in whose bonnets kittens went to sleep, of little boys who occupied an unreasonable length of time in doing errands, of disobedient youths, whose self-will got them into trouble, of naughty boys who told lies, of selfish children who were unwilling to relieve the poor, etc.

The knowledge of the world possessed by a bright child of thirteen is vast compared with Laura's inex-

perience. The ordinary child begins to take lessons in morals and behavior at a very early period; it learns its place in the world, learns what rights it may claim for itself, and what rights must be accorded to others. Of much of this social law, Laura was necessarily ignorant. She was aware of her own want of knowledge and wished to overcome it. Her interest in the moral to be drawn from a story, from the actions of persons, or even animals, arose partly from this cause, although it was in part attributable to the intense Puritanism of her nature.

Her intuitive sense of right and wrong was very remarkable. But the ethical questions involved in a story would probably have wearied her, as they do other children, save that she felt she was gaining knowledge in solving these moral and social problems. The fact that questions of ethics interested instead of tiring her is also a testimony to the wisdom of her instructors, and to the soundness of Dr. Howe's methods.

Her progress in clearness of thought and accurate use of language can be readily traced in her own journal, each volume of which shows an improvement on its predecessor. Nevertheless, Laura's dairy does not present an adequate test of her acquirements.

Her teacher tells us that she could not be made to understand the necessity of taking time and paper to write down her abstracts with the same fulness which she used in conversation, and that the accounts given with her fingers, of any subject, were much better than her written ones.

Her teacher says that Laura at this time made many mistakes in writing out her stories, which she never made when reciting them in the finger-language. Words or letters will be omitted, or occasionally one word will be written over another. It is surprising, however, that so few of these mistakes occur. A person possessed of his eyesight would make many more should he try to write blindfold, because his memory would not have received the training, which makes that of the blind man such a wonderful substitute for sight.

On the 13th day of March, Laura wrote the following: —

"Miss Swift said that we are going to the state house tomorrow this afternoon resolve is when I say I will be very good and not fret but I will be very gentle all the time. I make good resolutions. Stops are when we stop very little while to rest when we read loud with mouths when we are very tired, stops names are the comma"

And the end of the page brought these remarks to an abrupt close.

The school journal for the same date gives the clue to her statements: "Laura came down this morning and said: 'I hope I shall not be cross or make any noises or fret or deceive or tell any wrong stories this week.' Took advantage of this to teach her the word *resolutions*. She understood that very quickly, and then tried the word *resolve;* told her that when she thought she would do anything, she resolved to do it."

Laura's account of her visit to the State House is amusing, especially where she describes the applause bestowed on herself and the other pupils by the members of the legislature.

"Miss Swift and all folks and i went to the state house in the afternoon: the girls sang and worked and sewed and wrote and cyphered and read and practised on the piano. I knit on pitcher and wrote on black board and paper men stampped with their feet because they were happy to let to let girls know that they were very happy."

It is interesting to note the questions which Laura asked about words with kindred significations, thus showing her wish to be exact in her language.[1] For instance, she asked whether *think, guess, suppose,* and *understand* were the same. On being told, jestingly, that a flat-iron was needed to smooth her forehead, she wanted to know whether it was twisted or wrinkled, and then asked if *wrinkled* and *tumbled* meant the same thing, and also *jammed* and *tumbled.* Her teacher happened to use the phrase "to see if you want anything" and Laura promptly demanded, "what is anything?"

"What is anything!" What is everything? was the real question she was always asking with her swift fingers, with her outstretched hands, — asking, always asking!

[1] Notes, page 376.

VIII

1843

DR. HOWE'S MARRIAGE — EUROPEAN TRIP — BIRTH OF JULIA ROMANA

EARLY in the year 1843, Laura learned of the approaching marriage of Dr. Howe to Miss Julia Ward, the eldest daughter of Samuel Ward, the New York banker. In a letter of Charles Sumner's to Longfellow, written at about this time, mention is made of the "Three Graces of Bond Street;" these were Julia, Louisa, and Annie Ward.

In the spring of the same year Julia Brace left the institution and returned to Hartford. She had made some progress in learning arbitrary language, using both the finger alphabet and that of the metallic type-slate, on which she could spell many words. But she was too old to learn readily, and her guardian decided to take her back to the Hartford Asylum for Deaf Mutes. Laura was greatly troubled to think that her friend should lose the opportunities for education which she herself prized so highly. The following letter expresses this feeling, as well as her sorrow at the coming departure of Dr. Howe: —

14th of April.

"My dear Mrs. White, — I want to see you very much, I send very much love to you We are all very sad

to have Julia Brace go away to Hartford. I am sad that no one can not teach her and be kind to her. Miss Jennette sends love to you. Lurena sends much love to you. Dr. is going to be married to Miss Ward Mr Howe and Mrs Howe. They are going away in vessel on the ocean to go five thousand miles to stay six months they will be married in nine days. I am very sad not to see them till Autumn."

Laura was a little jealous of the young bride, the cause of the approaching separation from Dr. Howe. Knowing that Mrs. Howe would have the first place in his affections, she dreaded lest her own share of them should be diminished. She was too good a child to yield to this feeling, or to express it in word or deed. Nevertheless, there are traces of it in some of her conversations with her teacher. Thus she said to Miss Swift a few months after Dr. Howe's departure for Europe, "Does doctor love me like Julia?" The answer was, "no." "Does he love God like Julia?" "Yes." She repeated the question later, adding, "God was kind to give him his wife," and her teacher wisely diverted the child's attention to something else, in order to ward off any incipient discontent.

Laura's behavior at this trying time shows how much her thoughts and actions were controlled by the moral sentiment with which it had been one chief object of her education to inspire her. Her sense of right and justice, her love for Dr. Howe, and her love of approbation, all told her to suppress the unworthy feeling, which appears only faintly outlined in the record of her

daily life and conversation. A less clever or a more passionate child would have behaved differently. The intellectual tendencies of her nature are especially observable at this period of her life, when she is constantly crying for more light, more knowledge.

She wanted to go to the wedding, but the journey from Boston to New York was a long and fatiguing one, and the excitement of being present on such a momentous occasion would have been very intense to a child of her nervous, high-strung temperament. The great event and the wedding journey almost absorbed her thoughts, and we find constant references to them, both in her teacher's diary and in her own.

It is pleasant to find that she wished to receive the bride in a becoming manner, and felt her responsibilities as head of the family during the absence of Miss Jeannette Howe, who had gone to the wedding. She had the feminine instinct for house-cleaning, and we find her comforting herself by scrubbing down the closet shelves, while her friends were absent in New York. With sleeves and skirts tucked up she worked away, a voluntary Cinderella. When her teacher came to summon her to the geography lesson, she found Laura with the contents of two closets spread around her! So the lesson on boundaries was abridged for that day, but the record says: "She could tell me the names of the cities through which Miss Jeannette passed in going to New York."

The cares of housekeeping may have quickened her instincts of hospitality, for on the same day she said to

her teacher, "will you teach me to say 'Mrs. Howe,' because I shall want to call her."

It will be remembered that Laura could articulate a number of words, and had a separate noise by which to designate each of her friends. Mrs. Howe had already learned to communicate with her in her own language, as she records in a letter written at this time.

The newly married pair spent a day or two in Boston before sailing for Europe. Laura tells us that she was glad to see Mrs. Howe, and she was much interested in examining the steamship which was to convey her friends across the Atlantic. Of this she made a thorough inspection, visiting the galley as well as the state-rooms and cabins, and having a brief interview with the cook, who spoke to her in the language of cake, a language all children understand. But she had higher wants than that of cake. She wanted to know where men got milk to make it, and was accordingly taken to see the cow.

Monday, May 1, was the day fixed for the departure. When the day arrived Laura was very much excited, but she bore her trial bravely, and went on with her lessons as usual. Her excitement increased, and her teacher vainly strove to divert her mind by talking of the storm which raged outside. The disturbance of the elements seemed less real and vivid to her, however, than the agitation in her own soul, troubled as this was by the sorrowful thought of the loss about to befall her.

At length the time came for her to take leave of

Dr. Howe. He must have shown her the folly and weakness of giving way to her feelings. When she returned to her teacher she said: "Do not be very sad; I will make you happy."

Her friend and companion, Oliver Caswell, was brought in that Laura might forget her own grief in amusing him, and she again expressed the same unselfish sentiment: "Yes, I will try very hard to make him happy; he must not be sad."

She then led him to the empty rooms, that he might see all the baggage had been taken away, and the two children amused themselves with the life-preservers, and with talking together in the finger language, until dinner time brought a welcome diversion.

That night the sleep of exhaustion came to her relief. In the morning, she was sleeping so soundly that her teacher decided not to waken her for the usual early lesson in arithmetic. When she did get up, she seemed quite calm, and lessons were resumed at nine o'clock. Her teacher accidentally gave Laura a sum which she had done before, when she playfully took Miss Swift's hand from the book, and said: "You are thinking of doctor."

When her tasks were completed she talked over her plans for the week, and then indulged in a fit of childish glee and nonsense, trying to see whether one could touch his nose with his tongue! It is indeed but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, and with children it is only one step from tears to laughter! Thus her life settled quietly back into the usual routine

of daily study, work, and exercise. Her lessons were soon broken up, however, for a short time, by the usual spring vacation, and the consequent absence of her teacher.

All through vacation she wrote regularly in her journal, missing very few days. These entries are nicely written, and compare very favorably with those made under the direction of her teacher. It seems surprising that a girl of thirteen should have been so conscientious with regard to her diary, when left to her own resources, for it does not appear that "Miss Jeannette" assisted her in these efforts.

We find that she "knit much," and helped with household matters sometimes, sweeping the stairs or watering Miss Jeannette's plants. She paid various visits, occasionally holding and tending her hostess' baby, a pleasure that she dearly loved. One of these visits lasted four hours, she tells us! Sewing with the dressmaker, writing letters, walking, and playing with other children are among the occupations which she describes. Nor is she satisfied with chronicling her own doings alone. We are duly told what Miss Jeannette and other members of the family did.

On the 31st of May, Miss Swift and the scholars returned, and Laura resumed her lessons. But first she wished to know all about her teacher's vacation, and to tell what she herself had done during this interesting period.

On the 6th of July she was taken to see a menagerie, and spent four hours in feeling of the animals, and in

"listening" to descriptions of them. Her teacher was surprised to find that the little girl was very calm. She felt of the elephant's great foot, tusks, and trunk, and apparently was not in the least afraid of the "huge beast;" indeed she was only prevented from taking a ride on his back by the gathering crowd, who were quite as much interested in Laura as she herself was in the elephant. Before the monkeys' cage, she lingered for a long time, and laughed aloud, as their numerous tricks and antics were explained to her.

The following extract from her own journal describes this delightful excursion: —

"6th *July* . . . Mrs. Wales went to take tea in boston it was very damp Miss swift said that the animals were in the very large tent, wales talked much with me. 7th day of July thursday morning at seven oclock i and miss swift and all other folks went to see many animals i gave the elephant very many pieces of apple in his trunk i saw tusks and leg and foot I saw the parrot and leopard and dead giraffe, leopard was very little and very gentle we went to sit on elephants saddle monkeys were wild in cages, so I could not see them any" [i. e. could not feel of them.]

On the 18th of July, Laura and Miss Swift started for Halifax, Massachusetts, to pay a visit to Mrs. Morton. The little girl had known of the projected trip for some days, and called her teacher one morning that she might show the latter her preparations for the visit. Miss Swift was surprised to find that Laura had put all her clothes in good order, and had shown

much ingenuity in mending the old ones. Her darning was "a poem in linen," it has been said, and her old friends have been heard to regret that they had not preserved certain beautiful specimens of it. Laura also wished to help Miss Swift arrange *her* wardrobe, and to show her what to do. This was turning the tables on her teacher, who was herself neat and methodical, and greatly influenced and assisted Laura in forming those habits of exquisite neatness which came to distinguish her.

She started on her journey in the best of spirits, but did not forget to behave with due decorum during the trip. Her teacher asked her some question in jest while in the cars, and Laura replied: "We must not play, but be *very* still."

At Stoughton there was a long wait for the stage, but Laura did not intend to waste time in idleness. She proposed to her teacher that they should take out their needle-work, and occupied herself in this way for several hours.

On the first day of her visit at Halifax she was so happy that she did not know what to do with herself. She arranged her own clothes, and made herself very useful. The mosquitoes were the only drawback to her pleasure, and she asked: "Why did God make troublesome mosquitoes?"

Her lessons were continued during her stay with Mrs. Morton; but the boundaries of her school-room were enlarged, and she studied now in the green woods, now in the barn, and again near a pile of freshly sawn

lumber. In the woods she learned the different varieties of trees; the oak, beech, pitch pine, and white pine.

Laura had received an indoor lesson on various kinds of wood and trees not long before this time. Such was the delicacy of her touch that she could tell whether an article was made of oak, pine, or mahogany, seldom making a mistake. In the course of this earlier lesson, she came to a secretary which was veneered. She noticed that it differed from the other articles, which she had been handling, and asked for an explanation of the difference.

One day she observed that there was a great deal of work lying about the room; and asked the reason of it. The work belonged to a sewing-society, engaged in making up garments for the sufferers from a fire at Fall River, and Laura was much interested in hearing all the details of the catastrophe. Her head was still full of thoughts of those lovely, cool green forests, and she said, "I think the men must go out in the woods where I was with you, that are very thick, and cut much wood and send it to the poor people, because they will be very cold when it is cold weather."

When the pleasant visit came to an end, Laura went back to the institution, very sad at leaving Halifax, but happy to meet all her old friends at her adopted home. During the return trip she was allowed to examine every part of the baggage cars, which afforded her no small pleasure.

The following letter from Laura to her lame friend Lurena, was written soon after her return from Halifax.

It is much longer than any which she had previously written; but the copy given below is somewhat abbreviated.

Tenth day of September

My dear Miss Lurena Brackett, — I thought of you very often and very much. Were your friends much better when you got home? Are you going to have your leg cut to try to see if you can walk. If you could walk I should be very much delighted to hear you walk. If you can walk I want you to write a letter to me that you can walk. I send very much love and kisses for you and Rebecca. I want to see you very very much, I am well. It is much cooler. Are you better and stronger? Do you ever see the monkey often? Do you hold a little baby some times? Does it cry any at you? I have seen some gentle monkey. He had on a very pretty apron and dress. I shall make him a new apron some time when I can get time, but I am very busy now. Do you think of me very often? . . . I missed you all the time long. I am sorry and lonely much. How many weeks will you stay at home with Rebecca and monkey? Do you miss me all the time? I like to write a very large and wide letter to you, because I am your very best friend and like to tell you about very great deal many things to please you much. I know about prevent and share. Miss Swift taught me about the sun and earth and many things. Were you warm enough to ride in the cars? What time did you get there? Does monkey see you much? Did you write letter to Dr. Howe that I may come to Dudley to see your dear many friends? Are you teaching your brother to talk with his fingers? What do you dream in the night? Do folks take very good care of you? I hope that you go to ride to make you well and have very good air. Do friends read to you sometimes? Miss J. felt so

very sad because the cat went and ate her little one dear bird. He was so very much afraid. Who took you from the cars into the house? How many hours did it take you to ride in the cars in the morning. It takes me very long to write to you. Miss Swift read to me in book about very many things in the Geography. I like it very much. Is a little baby very good and well? Miss Lyman gave me a pretty ring so I made one pitcher for her to keep it to remember me many years. I have not seen Dr for nineteen weeks very very very very long.

My best friend good bye.

Laura's asking her friend what she dreams in the night shows how much interest she herself took in these visions. What the precise nature of her dreams was, whether they really partook in any degree of the character of things seen, we do not know. She says that she dreams of seeing, but it is probable that she did not. She had lost the sense of sight so early that it is doubtful whether any image of things seen in her early childhood remained in her mind. That she had no clear conception of what we mean by sight is shown by the following conversation with her teacher: "Laura in her arithmetic lesson said, 'my nerve *runs* this morning to be very bright.' I asked an explanation. She said, 'my nerve is to see things with, and it makes things look bright.' I asked what she could see. 'If I go to the window I can see if the sky is bright.' She came back saying, 'I see the sun.' Told her I thought she could feel it. She said, '*seeing and feeling are alike.*' This conversation occurred when she

was studying the rudiments of astronomy, and was specially interested in *feeling* the sun."

She was fond of dolls, and her treatment of them showed a certain imagination; she loved to act out with them many scenes from real life, and especially those relating to illness. Thus she was found at three o'clock in the morning, playing with her cups and saucers. She explained this strange proceeding by saying that her doll was ill, and that she was giving it medicine! All the details of invalidism were carefully carried out for the benefit of the dolls.

The institution was painted in September. Laura was very much interested in the process, which she duly recorded in her journal. "Ten man came to paint houses very nice." When they began to paint outside her windows, she felt the motion of the plank on which they were sitting, and wished to know the cause.

During October the usual semi-annual vacation took place at the institution; Miss Swift went to Philadelphia, and Laura remained with Miss Jeannette Howe. She did not feel much inclined to keep up her daily writing in the journal during this holiday, but finally consented to do so. She kept her promise, losing very few days. Among the interesting entries are those relating to a visit which she received from her parents.

"*October* 13*th*. my mother and my father and lady came at ten o'clock i was very much pleased to see my mother and she brought me many nice things to please me . . . my father bought me very many plums and parpermints and candy."

Next day we hear what these nice things were, for Laura enumerates them: "stockings and pantaletts and sheep [probably woollen] petticoat and pears and apples and three little round mince pies,"

"16*th October*. My mother and father went away to Bridgewater to stay three days. I felt sad to have her leave me alone. J and i and lizzy carried mother to ride in the carryall to the stage it was too very cold to ride far, but sun was very pleasanter."

We find many references to Oliver Caswell in her journal. Now Laura goes to see him make brushes very *nicely*, then he writes a "fine letter to Dr. Howe," and again he joins the feminine circle, busy in sewing on fine new clothes for his young friend. He makes them all laugh with his roguish tricks. "Many people sewed on my cloak and dress they were done almost. Oliver tried my cloak on and i and all the folks laughed very much, because it was very much queer."

From time to time Dr. Howe wrote to Laura. The journey, which was made in a travelling-carriage, was full of varied interests, historic, literary, and educational. Horace Mann and his wife, also newly married, had crossed on the same steamer. The two friends visited schools, prisons, almshouses, and all manner of public institutions together. They found that in Holland, Switzerland, and Germany the new system of articulation was being successfully taught to the deaf, and resolved that the experiment should be tried in the United States.

Laura's constant allusions to Dr. Howe during his absence show how much he was in her thoughts. If she met any of his friends, he was the theme of her talk. If she began any new study, her first desire was that "Dr." should know of her progress.

She amused herself at the tea-table one evening by carrying on an imaginary conversation with him. Holding out her hand toward the part of the table where he usually sat, she asked various questions of her absent friend. "Are you tired of going very far?" "Did you want to come back?" and more to the same purpose.

As the devout Mahometan measures the years from the Hegira, so Laura counted the days and months, reckoning from the departure of her friend; and thus she fell into an error, not knowing of leap year and its additional day.

The school journal says: —

"*April 29th, Monday.* Yesterday Laura occupied herself in the forenoon in writing letters. I noticed that she had dated them wrong and asked her what day of the month it was. She said the 30th. I told her no. She commenced assuring me she was right because 'April has thirty days and Dr. went the first day of May [of the previous year]; that was Monday, so Sunday was the last day of April.' I was amused at the process by which she had arrived at this result. Poor child, she does not know anything about leap year yet. She looked perfectly astonished when I told her that the first day of May would be Wednesday."

The following is among the number of letters she wrote to Dr. and Mrs. Howe during their absence.

Jan 28th, 1844.

My very dear Dr. and Mrs. Howe, — I want to see you very very much. I pity you not to see you for a year. Miss J. was very sick three days Sunday and Monday and Tuesday. Now she is very well and strong. One bird is blind now and he does not know the way in the cage but he tries to find some seeds or water to eat and drink it. Mr. Fisher painted on a cloth like my face and Oliver's face too for you to keep in new house. I send much love to you. I am well and strong. I love you best.

My best friends, Good bye.

The picture of Oliver and herself, which Laura mentions in this letter, represents Laura in the act of teaching Oliver to read; it is still at the Perkins Institution for the Blind. The artist who painted it was a brother of Dr. John Fisher.

The latter gentleman kindly took charge of the institution during the absence, in Europe, of his friend Dr. Howe. The portrait was intended as a wedding-present, to be given to the newly married couple on their return.

Laura seems to have been entirely patient with regard to the sitting for her portrait, although she says in her diary:

"22*nd. Jan.* I went to have picture painted like my face with miss swift and miss howe at half past nine o'clock. it took man two hours to paint."

Perhaps she rather enjoyed the interruption of the regular routine of her life caused by the necessary excursions to Boston, though, as we know, she did not like to miss her lessons. These were sometimes given to her during the sittings.

Laura was much interested in religious ideas, as is very evident from numerous passages in the journals. But the expansion of her mind in this direction was unduly and inconsiderately hastened, if not forced, by those who interfered with more zeal than wisdom. To whom did it of right belong to give this poor child the crown of all knowledge, the knowledge of her Creator and His laws? Did it not belong to the man who had first brought the light of human life and thought into her strange prison, who had planned out the whole wonderful scheme of her education, with its novel and successful methods? The child's parents were of this opinion, and were wise enough to intrust her religious as well as her secular education to the preceptor who had studied her case in every detail.[1]

No one was more anxious than Dr. Howe that Laura should receive religious instruction worthy of the name. He felt deeply his responsibility toward this pure young soul. While impatient of cant, he was himself a man of religious spirit. At the daily morning service, held in the hall of the institution, Dr. Howe for many years conducted the religious exercises; no strangers were admitted to them, for they were held in order that all the members of the school might join daily in a simple act of worship, not that any might be seen of men.

[1] Notes, page 377.

Who that ever heard that brief service of praise and prayer can forget it? The tones of deep reverence in which the director read the few verses from the Bible and repeated the Lord's Prayer, the solemn sounds of the organ, the pathos of the young voices and the sightless faces, blind larks singing their morning hymn of praise, — the whole formed a service more impressive than the utmost pomp and show of ecclesiasticism can boast.

If Dr. Howe had been a little less stringent in his rules, if he had allowed the outside world to peep in at six o'clock in the morning, many that cried out against him as an unbeliever would have seen their error. One reverend gentleman was admitted by a little plot between two of the employees, and left the institution with only words of praise for the man whom he had before so entirely misunderstood. But "the Doctor" was not at all pleased with this breach of discipline. He called up the offending teacher, and after inquiring how the gentleman came to be admitted to prayers, gave orders that the thing should never be allowed to happen again.

While he was most anxious that Laura should be instructed in the precepts of Christianity, he objected strongly to her being taught them more rapidly than she could understand, — to her receiving *words* instead of *ideas*. Dr. Howe was much troubled upon his return from Europe to find that the mind whose opening development he had watched with such wise care had been turned aside from the high paths where he hoped to lead it. His disappointment was very great.

As the child had acquired the greater part of such knowledge as she possessed by direct communication from others, she not unnaturally imagined that all men had been instructed in the same manner, and that God taught them as Dr. Howe and his assistants taught her.

Concerning the mysteries of life and death, she often spoke. She knew that without air we cannot live, and she longed to know more definitely why it is indispensable to us. The following extracts are from the school journal: "'How do we know there is air?' 'Why did God give us air?' 'What is wind made of?' '*Orrin's breath went away when he died.*' And again: 'I dreamed God took away my breath to heaven,' with a sign as of taking something away from her mouth. She said, 'how do we know that God lives in heaven?' Told her we read it. 'How could God talk to men and tell them what to write in a book?' and then she made a noise which she calls talking, and asked if it was so. Referred her to Dr. Howe. She said, 'he said he wanted to tell me all about God!'"

Miss Swift's explanation, that "we read it in a book," makes it clear to the reader why Dr. Howe preferred to answer Laura's questions himself.

Laura seems to have discovered for herself the existence of the witness of Himself which God has implanted in the human soul. She had, on a certain Sunday, brought one of the blind girls into the part of the house reserved for Dr. Howe and his family, and, in giving her teacher an account of the morning,

she did not mention this breach of discipline. Miss Swift had a long talk with her, explaining wherein the worst part of the offence lay, to wit, the concealment of a deed which she knew to be against the rules. "While talking she said: 'My thoughts tell me when I am good and when I am wrong;' so I told her the word *conscience* and explained it."

The frequency with which she spoke of death and heaven might lead us to imagine that her mind was in a morbid state, if we did not remember her intense curiosity on all subjects, and her constant thirst for knowledge. "How large is heaven?" "Is there a door to heaven?" "How does the sky look?" "What is it made of?" "Is heaven made of iron?" Many of her questions about God are of the same sort: "Can God be at sun?" "Can He walk and run to the sun?" "Is God ever surprised?"

In Laura's own diary she occasionally refers to religious subjects in her own quaint language.

"3*rd. Jan.* i thought about heaven and God that he would invite me sometime when he is ready for us to go to him. he made it storm very much. . . ."

"19*th. February*, 1844. i thought about heaven and god that i am his very best friend i loved him very very much and he loved much and best."

On March 7 Mr. Weld brought his deaf and dumb pupils of the Hartford Asylum to the Perkins Institution. Laura was very much amused at the signs used by the deaf and dumb, which her teacher

described to her, at her request. These signs, with their accompanying gestures, seem quaint and uncouth to those who are unaccustomed to them. Mr. Weld held a conversation with Laura, and at its close said, "I love you and I will pray God to bless you." She at once asked her teacher, "what is *pray?*" "To ask God." "What is *bless?*" "To give you good thoughts." Nothing more was said on the subject until the following day, when she said with a thoughtful air: "Will it do any good for Mr. Weld to pray God to bless *me?*"

Although Laura did not apparently know the word *pray* until Mr. Weld's visit, she knew perfectly well what the action meant, for we have seen, in the preceding pages, that she spoke of *asking God to give her good thoughts*, and demanded of her teacher, "do you ask God to give you good thoughts?"

During the absence of her teacher at church, on the following Sunday, she began to read for herself in the Book of Psalms, and became very much disturbed.

Miss Rogers, Oliver's teacher, found her with the book, very pale, and very much excited. She said "God is angry with the wicked every day; I was angry this year and last year, and I deceived Swift many times." Miss Rogers changed the subject, but as soon as Miss Swift returned from church Laura began again: "God will judge all people; what is *judge?*" Those terrible words of the Psalmist were still ringing in her ears, frightening her, as they have frightened other sensitive children who dared not ask any explanation.

Miss Swift's position was a difficult one, and she no doubt acted for the best, when she told her pupil that the latter could not understand the book now, but that when Dr. Howe came she would learn more. Laura's face brightened, and she said: "When are you going to teach me about heaven and God?"

Laura was much pleased with the letters which she received from Mrs. Howe, and said that she loved the latter very much. It still puzzled her a little, however, why "Doctor" did not love her best, when she loved him "best of any."

Dr. Howe himself announced to Laura the birth of his eldest daughter, in a beautiful letter written from Rome, wherein he essayed to give her an idea of the spiritual nature of God and the human soul. "Laura was almost beside herself when she first heard of the baby, and did not know what to do, but hug and kiss me," says Miss Swift. The child at whose birth she so greatly rejoiced was born in the Eternal City, March 12, 1844, and was christened Julia Romana.

One evening in February, Laura told Miss Jeannette that she was going to *caper*. Hearing a noise overhead a little later, Miss Jeannette and Miss Swift went softly upstairs to see what the child was doing. They found her in her night-clothes, running across the carpeted floor, and jumping on her bed; which operation she repeated a number of times, stopping to rest when she was tired, and laughing with delight to find the sacking of the bedstead become more and more depressed as these singular gambols proceeded.

She next began to swing the closet door back and forth a great number of times. After watching these antics for twenty minutes or more, her friends spoke to her, and told her it was time to go to sleep. Next day Miss Swift reasoned with her on the subject of "capering," told her that her bedstead could not stand such violent treatment, and that she would disturb the girls who had gone to bed. Laura said she did not wish to caper any more, and her teacher asked her why she had done so the night before. "Because I thought Doctor was coming home so soon," was the reply. In one of her lessons the word *brick-layer* occurred that day, and Laura said she thought a bedstead of bricks would be best for her.

On Washington's birthday, 1844, her teacher began reading to Laura the school journal of 1842, thinking the review might be of benefit to her, and might suggest topics of conversation. She was quite interested in this retrospective view, and remembered very well some of the scenes called up by the reading. Many of the words she had forgotten, and of some she had received imperfect ideas, and had never used them sufficiently to correct her wrong impressions. Thus, while she knew that clams were found in the ground, she apparently had not understood that they were found only in the neighborhood of water. Many words which she had found in books two years before, and which she had then brought to her teacher to have explained, she remembered very well, in spite of the fact that she had had no occasion to use them in the interval.



The review of the old journal proceeded slowly, as each word led to a long conversation, and many things had to be taught over again. But the development of Laura's intelligence during the two years was shown by the searching questions which she now asked.

IX

1844

DR. HOWE'S REPORTS — MR. TENNEY — THE GREAT TEMPERANCE PROCESSION — FOURTH OF JULY

WHILE few striking events occurred to break the even tenor of Laura's quiet, happy life, her existence had enough of variety to save it from monotony. The Perkins Institution for the Blind is a little world in itself, and the weekly exhibition day brought Laura into contact with many people. Crowds of interested sight-seers came on these occasions, especially on the first Saturday of the month. It was sometimes necessary to repeat the exercises, as on June 1, 1844, when between six and seven hundred visitors came, "and the hall was literally jammed twice." On July 6 there were no less than eleven hundred visitors!

Laura was of course the chief object of curiosity. It is difficult for us to conceive of the intense interest which she aroused, and in order to do so, we must remember that she was the first deaf, dumb and blind person who had ever been taught the use of language. Dr. Howe's contemporaries fully appreciated the wonderful nature of his achievement, which, with good reason, has been likened to that of Columbus. His

Reports were awaited as eagerly as the instalments of a new novel, for they contained new truths, stranger and more wonderful than any fiction. The interest was not confined to America and England, and the Reports were translated into several foreign languages.

Instead of spending all her days on a farm, moulding candles, and making butter and cheese, Laura was visited by all the distinguished people who came to Boston. Thus her infirmity brought its own compensation.

The following extracts from Laura's journal give a brief summary of the daily incidents which were of most interest to her at this time: —

"*first day of feburary.* miss swift was very sore with her lungs and throat . . . j walked six miles on ice by sea, and saw six hundred men cutting ice with axe to let ships go over. [The harbor was frozen over, and men were at work cutting the ice, to let the Cunard steamer start.] i and lurena played very much, she hid herself three times so i looked for her all about room. i hid my self four times for her to look all time for me in two closets and on pipe and in corner."

"2*nd. March.* we went to exhibition in the afternoon i was very gentle there. governor[1] came to see school. a lady gave me some candy she was very kind to me. i invite oliver to take tea with me and we had a party while swift went to concort [concert] after tea oliver was very happy to have party and company. for he was sad not to go to party and j was gone away."

"16*th. march* it rained violently all the time and made

[1] Governor Briggs, of Massachusetts.

the snow melt very fast . . . all. the girls went to sing in the hall. lurena and i took much galvanism. . . . cook was kind to give me nice d pie. niither men nor ladies came here." [This was Saturday, exhibition day, but the rain kept visitors away. The school journal says that Laura kept a regular account of wind and weather at this time.]

"7*th*. *April*. . . i saw a lady who came from hartford and juila brace was very well. . . . mr tenney was very kind to send me box with cushion on the cover and two large pins and many pins in lt [it] one for j to pin shawl. all folks went to lecture in the h l [hall] in the evening."

"14*th*. *April*. . . . we talked about my tenny i told to swift that he had no nice clothes because he has no kind friends i told her that i should like to have miss P and miss swift to go to hanover next autumn. but she said dr. howe would just be here so we could not go. it was so hot like africa." [The school journal says that on April 13th the thermometer stood at 80°.]

Poor old Tenney! His childish companion had already outstripped the old man in the race for knowledge. Laura's letter, acknowledging his gifts comments in a decidedly patronizing way on the faults in his letter.

April 12th, 1844.

My dear Mr. Tenney, — I thank you for box with pins very much. I like them very well. We could not understand your letter, for you did not write it very good and the words were very funny and I wish that you could write much better, as we do. Dr. Howe will come home next June. I am very well. I am fourteen years old. Dr. has got his wife, her name is Mrs. Howe. Miss J. is working on a very nice worsted chair for Mrs. Howe.

Do you ever pray to God to bless me. I always think of him and Heaven and my soul and being good for him to invite me to come to his Heaven. I love him the best of any one in the world.

My friend, goodbye, —

Dr. Howe thus comments on the correspondence:

"When, at last, she knew how to converse in English, and to write, he [Tenney] tried to be again useful to her, and to guide her mind. He began a correspondence, and sent her endless epistles, written in defiance of every rule and precedent in orthography, etymology, and syntax, and containing the most extraordinary rigmarole about all manner of things, but especially about the vanity of book-learning. He was forced to grant, grumblingly, that something had been done for her in the way of instruction, but still he thought it a pity that she had been taken from him, who could have done so much more. His love for her, however, lasted to the end, and the child proved a blessing to the old man; not one of his little early kindnesses was lost. May the grass grow green, and the birds sing blithely over thy grave, good Tenney, Laura's first and most loving teacher!"

In the following entry in her journal, and elsewhere, Laura seems to speak of her "little parlour" as being at the salesroom for the blind, in Boston. At this shop there were, many years ago, great piles of mattresses, heaped on old-fashioned bedsteads, forming a delightful romping-place for children, although climbing on the mattresses was strictly forbidden. Laura probably had some nook behind the long counters, or near the big desk where the book-keeper sat, that she

christened her parlor, and where it was convenient to leave her, while her teacher made necessary purchases.

"17*th. April.* oliver and i staid in my little parlour till they came for us. we talked together. oliver staid to tea with aunt."

"18*th. april* miss swiff went to see the house of reformation and correction, she saw many little bad boys and their master was teaching them in geography. and she saw a great room where they slept they had bowls and spoons full of bread and milk to eat. she saw many poor people sewing on clothes for many little boys very nice. and she saw a blind girl and many little girls with sore eyes. and she went to see bad men in house of correction they were making brass nails."

She had known for some time, through the stories read to her, of the existence of the House of Correction. In December of the previous year, she had pushed away Miss Rogers, because she was already talking to Mrs. Everett, and did not wish to be interrupted, when Miss Rogers approached her.

While talking afterward with her teacher about this piece of rudeness, Laura said: "Why do you not send me to the House of Correction?" and added, "I think if I am wrong you can send me to my chamber; that is my house of correction." She said this as gravely as possible, and felt troubled because she was not allowed to talk to Miss Rogers.

In April Laura wrote to Miss Abby Carter: —

"I am going to Wayland with Miss Wight tomorrow. Dr. Howe wrote a letter to me and said that Mrs. Howe

had a little baby, her name is Julia Romana. Dr. and Mrs. Howe love her very much, she never cries much and it is one month old. I want to see you very much. I send very much love to you. You must write a letter to me and send it by Sophia. I hope that you are very well. Miss J. burnt her right arm and was blistered much two weeks ago at breakfast, but now it is much better. My dear friend, good-bye."

With the thrift and industry which she had inherited from her mother, Laura laid her plans for doing a great deal of work in vacation, and wished Miss Swift to have the purses in readiness for her to work on. On March 16 it is recorded that she knit four purses during the week, "and is not idle a moment." Again: "She has become almost work-crazy, she is so much interested in completing her purses. She tells me each day how many she can do in one week, and is quite disappointed if she does not succeed as well as she anticipates." And elsewhere: "She does more work than three of the other children."

At last the long-expected beginning of vacation came, and the day fixed for Laura's journey to Wayland. She had decided to be *very* quiet during this visit, in the hope that she might be asked again, as she told her teacher, with childlike naïveté. She made the trip with Miss Wight, and evidently enjoyed very much the kindness and hospitality which she received, and the simple country pleasures described in her journal.

"30*th*. *april*. i was very glad to see miss martha and mrs wight with miss wight, we rode in the stage

at quarter of three o'clock and we came here at six o'clock."

"31*st. of april* [*sic*] tuesday at eight o'clock miss wight and i went to see many things and then we went to the barn i fed the horse and the cow. i saw doves two eggs and hens egg, i felt horse take many corns out of tin pail very very swiftly. in the afternoon we all went to visit wights aunts and folks." . . .

"1*st. may* in the morning we went to dig dandelions out of ground for our dinner. i saw some rhubarb and sausage. we fed the duck and he took corns out of our hands and he said that he thanked me for feeding him. . . . miss wight threw corns at doves but they were too timid of us they were very happy to eat corns and they said coo coo coo."

"*third day of May.* Many ladies and little children came to see Miss Wight last evening and in the afternoon and in the morning. In the afternoon Miss Wight and I went to ride on Jack's back and she rode on his back. But I was so timid to sit his back. I saw his eye and nose. At quarter past nine o'clock we went to ride very far way and had a very pleasant time."

The next entry chronicles Laura's return to the institution: the summer school term did not begin until May 29, but Laura seems to have had a very pleasant time visiting and receiving visits. Vacation gave an agreeable variety to her life, and her journal is often more interesting at this time than during the regular school terms. Miss Swift was absent during the greater part of the vacation, taking a needed rest, — the care of Laura was very exhausting to the nervous strength of whoever had her in charge, — but Laura was contented

and happy with "Miss Jeannette," one or other of the teachers spending some days at the institution, and relieving this lady of her charge.

On the 29th of May the summer term of school began; "the first bell rang at quarter before five," nearly all being present at prayers in the hall. The 30th of May was the day fixed for the great temperance procession. Many of the scholars had received permission to go to Boston, and Laura's teacher decided to choose this subject for the day's lesson, and to take her young charge to "see" the sights.

The school journal entry of May 30 says: —

"She has been very much interested in the cause ever since she read 'The Harvey Boys' and found there was such a thing as a drunkard; and when I told her I would talk with her about it, she was all interest and attention. Told her how many men would walk, and she said, 'I can go and feel the drums.' . . . Then she went back to the music and wanted to know if they had anything but drums, and made a sign for drawing the violin bow, and next followed a long conversation upon the manner in which it is made. She said, 'I think it is made of the tail of some animal.' Then she wanted to know why the people walked. Began to tell her that all who walked did not drink any rum or brandy. She said, with a great deal of energy: 'That is right, we can not have any men that love to drink *such liquors*.' Explained the words *temperate*, *intemperate*, *temperance*. She asked how they all knew when to come, who asked them, etc. Told her the friends of temperance in Boston asked those in other towns to come to Boston and have a great meeting. Told her that Governor Briggs would go with them, and would ride in a

carriage with four white horses. She said, 'I never saw any white horses. Will they get soiled quickly lying on the ground?' Explained the word *procession*. 'Do *poor* people walk in the procession?' Yes, all who love temperance. 'Can they walk without shoes?' These are specimens of the questions she asked, and I believe she enjoyed it as much as any one."

Laura mentions this occasion in her letter to Dr. Howe, the next day.

"I am very glad that you are coming home very soon. I love little Julia very much. We all went to Boston to see a temperance procession yesterday morning. Very many men went to the Common and staid till eleven o'clock and then they walked through streets to let people see that they did not drink rum and brandy. I felt the drum, and horses dance much. The Governor Briggs rode in his carriage with three gentlemen. He had four horses. He talked much to the people. The streets were very full of people. I am very well. It is after year since I saw you. Your house looks very nice and white and delicate and very tender. I send a great deal of love to you and dear Mrs. Howe. All my friends are very well. I want to see you very much. I had a very pleasant time in vacation and I staid three nights at Mrs. Wales. I love you the best of any one because you support me much."

She was so much interested by the musical features of the great temperance procession, that she asked her teacher to let her inspect the musical instruments used by the blind pupils. She was accordingly taken to the music room, and the instruments and method of using them were explained to her. "Whatever she touched,

as the drum, triangles, etc., she always did it in time, and the pleasure that she derives from feeling the drum seems to be from that." When the ophicleide was shown her, she thought the mouth would be a good bath tub for Julia [Dr. Howe's baby daughter].

Not long after this time, her teacher showed Laura an Æolian harp. "She examined it in every part, and then asked me to play upon it. She was very much surprised when I told her the wind played on such a harp. She then was very anxious to *feel* it. I put it in the window and placed her hand on the side, but told her I thought she could not feel anything, for I could not see the strings move at all. She sat very still for a few minutes, but at the first note upon the harp she started and said it was like the organ; it happened to be a low string that sounded, and was really so much like it that I had thought the organ must be playing. Next the wind struck the high notes and she said, 'that is like singing.' Laura asked many questions about the harp, and its giver, and was much interested in his projected journey around the world, asked who told him to go, etc. Her teacher felt of the harp, and told her that she could feel very, very little. Laura replied: 'Is it like *very* small animals that you can see with a spy glass?'"

She was full of sympathy for those who were sick or hurt, or in trouble of any sort. Her tenderness to young children, and her devotion to the sick and suffering, were among her best traits of character. One evening, when she was walking with her teacher, a

lady was thrown from her horse very near them. Laura perceived that Miss Swift started, and wanted to know the reason, and she was therefore told of the accident. She had a great deal to ask next day about the horse and its rider, and when Dr. Fisher came in, she desired her teacher to ask him whether he went to the hotel to see the lady, and whether she was hurt.

"*First day of June, Saturday.* In the evening at nine o'clock," says her journal, "all folks looked out of windows and saw fire and Mr. Wells barn was burning up and his black man ran and untied the horse to take away out, the man went down street and said fire loud and rang the bell violently to call folks so as to put water over fire. barn was burnt down."

She was anxious to hear all about this fire, and asked her teacher how the barn took fire, how much was burned, what was done to put it out. She was accordingly told something about the fire-engine and hose.

"4*th. July.* we all went to the grove in the morning and all the people were talking all the time about many things we staid there two hours. we all pounded on the tables while we were eating dinner we had cup cake and hot ginger cake and little round pies and ham and different kind of bread and pine apple and cheese and cherries for dinner, and we had a very pleasant time all the rest of the day."

The people who "talked all the time about many things" were doubtless the speakers of the day. In the grove where the blind pupils celebrated Independence Day, there was an oration by Edward Bond,

a poem by Joseph Smith, an ode by C. Higgins, and music by "Alexander." In the schoolroom the tables were spread for one hundred and forty persons, and the pounding thereon was doubtless in approbation of patriotic speeches or sentiments.

Laura had had various questions to ask her teacher beforehand about the 4th of July, but she did not ask *why* it was celebrated. Children are usually more interested in the celebration of a holiday than in the event which it commemorates, and a parent usually volunteers the more useful part of the information, namely, the *raison d'être* of a holiday.

"*twentieth day of July saturday*," writes Laura, "a gentleman came here who lived in virginia teaching the scholars. he had his wife and he was small and deaf and dumb, and he asked me questions on the map and it made me laugh very much to have him teach me much. his aunt invited me to go see her and stay very long time. company bought two purses but Mrs. turner wanted one."

This gentleman was a Mr. Job Turner, who asked leave to question Laura on the map. She answered every question but one very quickly. He introduced her to Mrs. Turner and Laura was very much pleased, though afterwards she expressed her surprise that a deaf and dumb man should be married. At the time she asked him if he had a minister.[1]

[1] The fact that this deaf and dumb man was married may have suggested to Laura the possibility of marriage for herself. We find her, about a year after this time, asking her teacher whether she (Laura) should ever be married.

The blind pupils made their annual summer excursion on the last day of July, but Laura went instead to Lynn, where she visited a book bindery and shoe manufactory. To her great delight, she was allowed to examine the whole process of binding, and she quickly learned how to sew the leaves together. At the shoe factory she was specially interested in the different varieties of Morocco leather. When she was shown a kind of shoes worn by women in the West, Laura was quite skeptical. She insisted that no lady could wear such heavy foot-gear, that they must be intended for men!

"*Fifth day of August Monday.* company came to see the schoolars i thought of dr. howe and his wife and the baby all the time that I should be very gay to see them. my teacher was very sick with her lungs all the morning so that she could not teach me any so i knit a purse all day. i staid a little while in mrs. howe's room and it made me think much about her and doctor and the baby. and i dreamed of them last night that his coat was made of velvet in europe and he did not ask me how i did. i was glad to see him."

Laura was quite troubled because Dr. Howe did not, in her dream, shake hands with her, nor ask her how she did. In fact her mind at this time was completely engrossed with the thought of the doctor's return, and that of Mrs. Howe and baby Julia. Miss Swift records that her pupil talked of little else, for whatever the subject of conversation was, it always worked around to the one topic which absorbed Laura's faithful heart.

If it was her work, she told her teacher how much she wanted to do before "Doctor's" return, and what she wished to do to surprise him. If Miss Jeannette was making a new collar, it was to wear when the doctor came home. One day Laura expressed a wish that the east wind would blow hard for many days, that the long-wished-for ship might be wafted into port. She was anxious not to do anything naughty during this season of waiting, for "it will make Dr. Howe very unhappy when he comes home and that would be wrong, because he must be very happy to see his friends again."

She had been intensely disappointed, on hearing that the return of the travellers would be delayed until September. It was no doubt for this reason that it was thought best she should not know on what day Dr. Howe was expected, and his return was accordingly a surprise to her. She was delighted to welcome her "best friend," but was obliged to wait a week longer, to see Mrs. Howe and the baby, who stayed for a few days with friends in New York. She was told, some days before Dr. Howe arrived, that he would not bring the baby with him, and could not at once reconcile herself to this delay. She anticipated the greatest pleasure from taking care of the infant, and recorded gravely in her journal her intention of giving her playthings to little Julia. "Mrs. Howe's child would be very glad to have my dolls and all other things."

Laura thought she was growing too old to play with dolls, and apparently did not wish Dr. Howe to find

her engaged in such childish amusements. She therefore decided, after a long discussion upon the best manner of disposing of her playthings, to give them to the baby. She enjoyed inspecting the various beautiful things which the travellers had collected during their European tour. These included various art treasures, and among others, some ancient carved cabinets from Avignon, which were said to have come from the palace of the exiled Popes. One of these cabinets is decorated with figures of heathen gods and goddesses, including figures of winged children.

"*Sept.* 10*th.* At eight, Laura made a petition that she might be allowed to go and see the new things which Doctor had brought from Europe, and as they were now to be seen as well as at any time, took her down and spent two hours in telling her about them. The winged boys amused her very much, and some of the images, but the carved work on the doors she did not seem to appreciate at all, and was not much interested in it. The wagon for the baby was the most beautiful thing to her, and she thought she would like to ride in it herself." (School Journal.)

On the 11th of September, Mrs. Howe and the wonderful baby arrived. Laura thus chronicles the event.

"*eighth day of September.* Doctor went to New York in the afternoon to bring Mrs. Howe and baby home with him on Wednesday morning. I went to the garden with Miss Swift and her sister, and the gardener gave me sweet beautiful roses."

"11*th*. *September*. I was very glad to see my friends. in the morning miss j. and mrs. howe went to the city at after one, and they had not any dinner till almost four o'clock, mrs. Howe gave miss j. a very pretty bracelett. many people came to see the blind school from europe and michigan and some [other] places. mr lawrence came to see the scholars. mrs howe's baby was not very well at all, i talked much with her in the evening."

It was not until the second day, however, that Laura saw much of the baby, when we find that she was so anxious to obtain possession of the little creature that she managed to get it in her arms while eating her breakfast.

"12*th*. *Sept*. I held the baby at the table before I had done my breakfast, and I saw her in her little carryall riding around the table. Doctor was drawing the handle for her before dinner i made her to sleep."

Her kindness to this child was amply repaid in later years. Julia Romana Howe, afterward Mrs. Anagnos, took the deepest interest in the work of her father, and later of her husband, in behalf of the blind. Her pleasant friendship with Laura lasted until her death, and the latter was a frequent guest at the table of Mr. and Mrs. Anagnos, in that wing of the institution which had been her home during her childhood and youth.



Julia Romana Howe



X

1845

LAURA RECEIVES A DIPLOMA — MRS. MAILLIARD'S REMINISCENCES — A NEW TEACHER

ON the walls of the Perkins Institution hang many medals and diplomas, awarded to Dr. Howe for new appliances, apparatus, and improvements of various kinds and to his pupils for their work.

Laura was allowed to take her part in the industrial exhibitions. She knit a pretty purse for the Mechanics' Fair, and a diploma and medal were awarded her.

The school journal says in this regard: —

"*Jan. 20th.* At twelve, took the diploma given her by the Mechanic Association for a lesson and taught her the meaning of all the words on it. First, I read it all through as it was written and she seemed to be frightened at the array of unknown words, but at last she was very much pleased with having learned them all and understood them. We did not have time for the medal, so promised it for tomorrow, with a review of today."

Miss Rogers, who had been Laura's and, later, Oliver Caswell's teacher, resigned her position at this time, and it became necessary for Miss Swift to give the lad instruction for a couple of months, instead of devoting

her undivided attention to Laura, as she had done for two years. It is interesting to note the contrast between the two children, Laura far surpassing her comrade in intelligence and quickness.

Miss Swift says: —

"*Feb.* 21. I had no idea of the difference in his mind and Laura's until now that I have attempted to teach him. He is so very slow compared with her and asks few questions, but seems perfectly satisfied with what I tell him, without inquiring farther."

The reminiscences contained in the following letter from Mrs. Adolphe Mailliard (Miss Annie Ward), Mrs. Howe's youngest sister, relate to this period of time. Miss Ward was a woman of exceedingly gentle and amiable disposition, deeply imbued with a spirit of self-sacrifice, but endowed with wit and a keen sense of humor, in addition to great firmness of character. Her influence over Laura was a fortunate one.

"In the summers of 1845–46, I spent several months with your mother, and it was then that I saw so much of Laura. We sat beside each other at table, and I remember how carefully she washed the cups and saucers after breakfast, with much less effort than I should have made, and with a niceness and precision which would have satisfied the most fastidious housekeeper. When this task was over she generally sat down with her work-basket, and threading her needle by finding its eye with the tip of her tongue, would render good service in using it. She was hemming a set of sheets when we first worked together. She was fond of fancy work, and

even at that early age partly clothed herself, by the sale of her purses, watch-chains, etc. I soon lost all painful impressions in regard to her limited capacities, for she seemed literally 'one of us,' doing precisely what we did, with a quickness and dexterity which suggested a 'change of base,' in processes, not want of any of the senses. Laura was very fond of dress and ornaments, and delighted in borrowing our rings and bracelets for her own wrists and fingers. I saw her many years later, when we were both quite advanced in life, and was amazed by her repetition of the old search after ornaments. Finding neither rings nor bracelets, nor watch, nor breastpin, she wrote in my hand in a pathetic way, the question 'poor?' Her distress seemed so great that to comfort her I betrayed the savage ornaments in my ears. With great emphasis and no pity in her face, she instantly wrote the harsh word 'vain!' Through her delicate sense of touch, she was quite a connoisseur in the different fabrics of our dresses, and would invariably feel my skirt as we were seated at the dinner or tea-table, saying, if it was of silk or of very fine muslin: 'There is company today, I know, for you have on your best dress.' She explained to me also that in other ways she was aware of unusual numbers in the room. She knew of the increase by the atmosphere.

"Probably you remember one interesting peculiarity of Laura's; I mean her power of combining a consonant and a vowel, in the different sounds which she had taught herself to make. We all had distinct names such as 'Ro-ro,' 'Ba-ba,' etc., and they were given to us at sound of our footsteps. Her name for me was 'Fi-fi,' and so unfailingly did she recognize me by the vibration of the floor under my tread that if I were in haste and had not the time to talk with her, I could not by the softest pos-

sible tread evade recognition. From time to time I read to her, occasionally in the Psalms, and I remember her earnest question: 'Do you ever pray?' The fatigue of reading to her without greater practice in the finger language often drew from her the question: 'Are you very tired?' 'Yes, Laura, why do you think so?' I would ask. 'Because your fingers move so slowly.' As she talked with me, her hand was constantly passed over my face to find out whether I was amused and smiling. She had other ways also of judging of person's moods, and told me that between the quick vibrations under her feet and the way in which her hand was taken she could distinguish any haste or displeasure.

"I have very amusing recollections of a sea-bath which we took together, in which the tide was on the increase. Laura was soon conscious of this change, and asked me what made man push water so. I explained to her that the tide and the current were making the water rise, and she instantly asked: 'What, currant that grows in the garden?'

"I next saw Laura in New York; her health having been unusually delicate, your father thought that a change of air might be of service to her, and she was allowed to spend a few days with me in Bond Street. I remember that she arrived in the evening, after a tiresome journey, but although fatigued, she desired to be taken at once all over the house, and felt the corners of the rooms, and the furniture, and at the end of her inspection decided that she liked New York better than Boston. At the end of six years we met again in the Institution for the Blind, having in the meanwhile corresponded from time to time, and to my surprise upon taking my hand she called me at once by the old name 'Fi-fi.' If she had known of my arrival, it would not have been so sur-

prising, but her recognition was due entirely to the touch of the hand, or to her remembrance of the shape of mine. One other souvenir of Laura has especially interested us: it is that of an attempt of hers to write a French letter to Uncle Do [Mr. Mailliard] in acknowledgment of an embroidered handkerchief, which he had given her: —

"Twenty-fourth of May.

"My dear Sir, — Je vous remercie très beaucoup pour votre mouchoir. I love Annie very dearly.

"Ma chère amie adieu.

"L. D. Bridgman."

A new era in Laura's life opened in the latter part of August, 1845, when Miss Sarah Wight became her teacher. This lady had taught for several years in the girls' department of the institution. She was of a gentle, spiritual nature, and the value of her influence upon Laura can hardly be over-estimated. The teachers who successively assisted Dr. Howe in educating Laura Bridgman were earnest, devoted women, who labored faithfully in the discharge of their arduous task. To the last of them, Miss Wight, was intrusted the most difficult undertaking of all, that of training Laura's spiritual nature.

Laura was now in her sixteenth year; she felt that she was no longer a child, yet in her case, far more than in that of ordinary persons, it was imperative that moral guidance should constantly be received.

How deeply Miss Wight felt the responsibility intrusted to her will be seen in the extracts from her school journal. Miss Wight's diary differs very widely

from Miss Swift's in the character of the events chronicled. The journals kept by these two ladies supplement one another admirably, and throw far more light on Laura's character and attainments than the work of any single person could have done. Miss Swift, careful, painstaking, and practical, has given us a detailed account of Laura's daily progress in her studies. She occasionally tells us of her pupil's moral struggles, but her main theme is Laura's intellectual unfolding.

Miss Wight took charge of Laura when she was entering on a new phase of development. Her pages deal largely with the moral growth of her pupil and the trials which attended it. Her story tells of the endless struggles between the strong will, the high temper, and the Puritan conscience which characterized Laura Bridgman. Before all else Miss Wight taught Laura self-control. It is necessary to bear this constantly in mind while reading Miss Wight's journal. It contains a record not intended for publication, but to help Dr. Howe and herself in their task. Hence Laura's little acts of insubordination are set down minutely as a faithful account of her progress.

Laura wrote to Miss Swift soon after Miss Wight had assumed charge of her: "Why was I not always so good with Swift?" It seems probable that she was more headstrong during the first part of Miss Wight's administration than she had previously been. Dr. Howe was anxious that she should no longer be kept under the restraint proper to childhood, but should be

led into the liberty belonging to self-contr
hood. Miss Wight entered fully into his pl
Laura's later journal we see how the pati
judicious kindness of the teacher won the heart
pupil. She speaks of Miss Wight in terms of aff
tionate endearment, and her love overflows in a variety of pet names.

Laura's health began to fail in the autumn of this year, and was seriously impaired during a great part of the succeeding year, 1846. For a time her life was thought to be in serious danger. She was without any regular instruction [1] from May 1st to August 29th, 1845, and in the interim had forgotten a part of what she had learned.

Miss Wight's journal begins with this entry: —

"29*th August.* Laura has been anticipating great pleasure from a visit to her mother, but has been very patient and uncomplaining now that she is disappointed. That it was not from want of affection for her friends appeared from the delight she evinced upon receiving a letter written by her brother. She danced about the room with it and was not satisfied until I had read it all to her twice. Walking into Boston she said, 'I want some money to buy presents for my friends. I must speak to my father about it.'"

"*Sept.* 22*nd.* Last evening she wrote an original story as follows: 'The Story called two Children. A

[1] In one of Laura's autobiographies she says: "Dr. obtained a young lady Miss Jarvis. She came to console me on the 9th. of July. I liked to have her stay with me until Wight came to replace S. on the 29th. of Aug."

little girl six years old & a little boy eight years old: their names were called Etta & Mac. Etta had a very beautiful bird called Koorok which was a gift to Etta. And she always took good care of him. He had a very pretty large cage to live in. As soon as she rose up & dressed & fixed herself she always went down stairs to give Koorok some seeds & clear water & sugar every morning. When she went to pass by he would sing to be glad to see his mistress because she was exceedingly kind and good to Koorok always. Mac had a very good little pony & when he was going to ride on his pony Etta desired to ride with him & she ran & said Mamma, Mamma, may I go to ride with Mac on the pony? Yes, said Mamma, I hope you will have a pleasant ride. Said Etta, I am very much obliged to you for permission. Etta & Mac slept together every night but sometimes they talked and played so much their Mother went up stairs & saying to them you must go to sleep suddenly for I am afraid if you sleep too late, you will not get up for the breakfast. One day their Papa bought Mac a very splendid watch & he was exceedingly gratified to have it & always took good care of it. Their parents loved them so much so they frequently let them go to see their friends when it was pleasant weather. They loved Koorok exceedingly.' "

" *October* 11. It was so cold this morning without a fire that we could not sit still with comfort, so I told Laura to exercise instead of a lesson. She was in high glee, laughing incessantly."

" *Oct.* 13*th*. In recess she took her book and began to read. When I spoke to her she said, 'I like to read better than to work; it is more useful.' This shows how closely she imitates those about her, for six weeks ago, she said to me quite reproachfully: 'You like to read better than

you do to work.' Laura should have a perfect example in every particular, constantly before her. Seeing Marco asleep she asked if animals have dreams when they sleep; or if they have instinct."

"*Oct.* 24. When I returned she was shutting the blinds with much noise. I touched her, when she turned and said: 'I was afraid some bad people and wild animals had killed you.' [Laura was displeased, in this instance, at Miss Wight's having remained away unnecessarily long, as she thought. Her lonely condition, when left by herself, rendered her less patient of solitude than ordinary children even. It was now vacation; Dr. Howe and his family were away, it would appear, and she spent most of her time with Miss Wight, who was obliged occasionally to take some rest; for to be constantly with a person in Laura's condition is a great nervous fatigue. Slamming the blinds appeared to afford relief to her feelings, even though she could not hear the noise.]

"*Oct.* 30. In teaching Laura history, found that she was entirely ignorant of the nature of governments. She knew that one man was called president, but how he happened to be so rather than any other man she did not know. We talked a long time about government, etc., but I am afraid she has not much idea of it now."

"*Nov.* 2. Laura is very desirous to know something of George Washington, an engraving of whom hangs in my room. After telling her where he lived and how long ago, I began to tell her the story of the hatchet. When I came to where his father discovered the mischief, she became quite excited and stopped my hand for a moment and then said: 'Did he confess to his father?' Went on with story, giving G.'s own words, 'I cannot tell a lie,' etc. She blushed deeply and said, 'I was so afraid

people would blame me.' Then told her that his father was so glad that his son was brave enough to tell the truth, though he expected to be blamed, that he forgot his sorrow about the tree. This story has made quite an impression upon Laura, and I think it will be useful. Invariably she applies whatever I may read or tell her to herself, whether it condemns or is to her credit."

"*Nov.* 4. When I returned she said soberly: '*Why do I have two thoughts?* Why do I not do what my conscience tells me is right?' Told her I thought when she began to do wrong she was in play, and afterwards her firmness led her to continue to do wrong, though her conscience was telling her all the time that she was wrong. We talked much more than an hour about different motives. In conversations of this kind I think Laura takes a deeper interest than in anything else. When I told her it was time for her to have recess she said: 'I love you so dearly for teaching me many new things about thoughts.'"

Laura's speech, "why do I have two thoughts?" alluding to the conflicting tendencies toward good and evil, is remarkable, as is also her teacher's statement of the girl's absorbing interest in questions pertaining to morality. It will be observed that she punished herself for her wrong-doing: "My left hand harmed me."

In reading Laura's own journal, it is evident that she sometimes failed to grasp all the ideas which her teacher strove to impart to her. Thus, in telling about Abraham and Isaac she describes them as living in "western corner of Palestine place," but she is perfectly clear about Isaac's filial behavior to his parents.[1]

We must avoid, however, the error of supposing

[1] Notes, page 379.

that her ideas upon any given subject were as confused as her journal would sometimes lead us to infer. Her use of language, even when she was in her sixteenth year, was occasionally very primitive, or like that of a foreigner.

Laura says of Miss Wight's coming: —

"29*th. Aug.* i was very much gratified when miss wight commenced to teach me to day & she tuaght me at nine about in artumetic [arithmetic] & to cypher, at ten o'clock i shall resolve to be good & do what she advise or to forbid or require me always, we shall be very happy together."

Some further entries of this period are added here. Much of her interest was centred on her studies in history.

"5*th. Sept.* Some people came to live on James River in Virginia from England, and some of other people came to Plymouth in Massachusetts from England. It was in winter and they tried to build a house as fast as they could. They had not warm house to stay in.

"8*th. Sept.* I heard about an ourangoutang who was dressed like ladies and could sleep in a nice bed and make it nicely like us, she could wait upon the table and used to wash and wipe the dishes and could walk about in the room like a lady. She came to Boston a year ago from Asia, with a silk dress and shoes on, she was taught how to cut [with] a knife and fork, she likes the fruit best of anything else. Some of them learn to drink wine and use a napkin when they drink tea and coffee from a cup, sometimes they carry pitchers on heads to get some water and bring it back for the people."

"10*th*. *Sept*. Wight taught me history yesterday. Some people went to Connecticut from Dorchester and there were no roads nor railroads in Hartford, they had no guide to go with them but compass, it is made of iron and was called magnet to tell them what way to go. If it was hung up it would always indicate north and the people cut down the woods and built houses with constructions. They had cows and drove with them, and gave the milk to folks. There was another t[r]ibe Indians in Norwich called Penuot [Pequot] and they called for the chief Mohican. Wight read to me about Malacca, it is three hundred miles long and the people are not good they have ships to meddle other folks things."

"24 *Sept*. In Virginia there was a gentleman whose name was Powhatan and he had a very good daughter whose name was Pocahontas. Powhatan was an Indian Chief of Virginia and there was another man named John Smith he was very brave, one day he went in a boat on the river and he left the boat a little while to go on the shore but at last the Indians wanted to destroy him, and they attempted to tie his arms so that he could not escape, but Powhatan's daughter preserved John Smith. I went with my excellent teacher Miss Wight to visit her aunt and cousins."

"25*th* *Sept*. I, heard more about Virginia. John Smith made Indians go between him so that they need not arrow him so easily, but at last he attempted to rush till he got into swampy ground and he sunk in so he could not get out, soon the Indians went and pulled him out. At last Pocathontas threw herself on him to ask her father not to kill John, and she cried exceedingly for she desired him preserved. The Indians intended to kill him and all the white people in Jamestown because they did not want they to live in country. Pocathontas

was very brave to go in dark and stormy night and she married an English man Mr. Relfes, and went to England again."

"*First of Oct.* I studied six hours diligently. I received a nice black silk apron with four ornaments & a note from my very dear friend Miss Annie [Ward] in the morning. It assigned me exceedingly pleasure. We saw a gentleman in the school-room who intended to go in a ship at one o'clock, and whom would see the queen in London in England. & after my dinner Sophia came to walk at five o'clock & met Wights friends in the street."

"*Sixth of Oct.* I study but three hours because my excellent teacher was sick for two hours. at dinner time then she got much better. It was very stormy day. I had dinner in my room with Miss Wight. & I worked & she wrote too. Then we performed the exercise for us to get warm. . . . Then I went to stay with Mrs. Howe & her little baby I held it for a little while."

We return to the school journal: —

"*Dec. 3rd.* Again commenced teaching Laura. She has had no regular instruction for a month past. For a fortnight I was engaged in the girls' school and for the last two weeks have been absent. Laura has been with me all the time and almost without exception perfectly good. This morning she was all life. 'I am so glad that you will teach me today.' But the first lesson in arithmetic was not good."

"*Dec. 12th.* This morning Laura was quite successful in arithmetic. Dr. Howe was too much engaged to teach her and I employed that time in reading a story to her showing that happiness does not depend upon clothes or food or anything outward, but that all are happy who cherish good thoughts and kind feelings. Talking of

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slipping on the ice, taught her the word *friction* and its effect in retarding motion, then asked her about a lever, but found that she had forgotten everything respecting it, and she could recall nothing except that perhaps Swift taught her long ago. With some blocks of wood and strong pole I showed her the advantage of using the first kind. Laura spent some time in writing, which prevented me from giving a lesson in history until evening, when we talked an hour and half very pleasantly.

"Laura had taken her work and I was reading when she asked me if I would invite one of her friends to see her at eight; said yes, and asked whom she wished to invite. In her ecstasy she took my arm and shook it quite rudely. Asked her if she thought it was pleasant to me? She did not know. Told her playfully I would show her a little how it was, and did so. 'Does it make you cross to have any one shake your arm?' Told her no, but that no one liked such things. She said then, 'I do not.' Told her again, as many times before, that it was not right for us to do to others that which we should be unwilling to have them do to us. When she asked me if it made me cross, she put her hand to my face and perceiving I was laughing, she laughed also. After knitting a short time she said: 'Miss J. said it was wrong for Mrs. Hart to whip her little boy, so,' giving me at the same time no gentle blow on my arm. I laid her hand away gently and she went on with her knitting, but looked troubled. She went to bed as usual and nothing was said about the blow, until I went to tell her about some articles of dress that I had been mending for her. 'Did you mend my stocking because I was so unkind to you, as the English and Indians were?' Told her no, but because she needed them. Did you feel unkindly when you struck me? 'Yes.' Why did you

not tell me you were sorry before you went to bed? 'I felt so guilty.' She seemed to feel troubled. Kissed her and bade her good-night and said '*try* to be good.'

"She seemed so unhappy afterwards that I spoke to her again, told her that if she tried every day she would learn to control herself. That I only desired that she should resolve to try, and then think no more about it and go to sleep.

"*Dec.* 13*th.* Good lesson in arithmetic, but Laura was not in her usual spirits. I said nothing, hoping it would wear off. After breakfast I told Laura that she told me last night she felt unkindly towards me, and asked if she knew the cause of it. Asked if I said anything that troubled her. 'No, I think it was because I did not refrain from bad thoughts.' Do you know what made your thoughts bad? Was it because I showed you how you shook my arm? 'No. I think my conscience was bad.' Told her that it was never bad, that it would never tell her to do that which she knew to be wrong. Asked if she did not know it was wrong. 'Yes, but I did not obey my conscience, and that was the reason that I slapped you.' In a few minutes she said 'I am too old to be reproved.' But you are not too old to do wrong. 'My mind can reprove me.' Asked her if she did not wish to be told when she was doing wrong. 'No, but I do not wish to do wrong.' Told her that I thought no one was ever too old to be told of their faults. You do not wish to injure your teacher; why do you not tell her that you are sorry that you struck her? A half laugh and no reply. Left her for half an hour to her own thoughts. On speaking to her again asked her what she had been thinking of. 'Praying to God, for He can help me best. I asked Him to send me good thoughts.' She did not say this with seriousness as usual, but as if

she was repeating words merely. 'People told me always to ask God to help me.' You struck your teacher who is always kind to you, are you not sorry? No reply. Do you think your thoughts are all good and your feelings all kind now? Still no reply. Left her until it was time for her lesson from Dr. Howe. 'Do not tell Doctor I have been so unkind.' Made no reply at that time. As we went down stairs she made some of her joyful noises and seemed trying to throw off her uncomfortable feelings.

"Dr. Howe was not in the office and she returned with me. I did not like to force an unwilling expression of sorrow from Laura by depriving her of her lessons, and I could not control my own feelings sufficiently to give her a regular lesson. I have always found too that often when a reproof would have hardened the child, to show her some marks of kindness or allow her to do something for me will completely subdue her. Allowed her to give some account of the story that I read to her yesterday, thinking that some parts of it might remind her of her own duty. But she said nothing, and sat down to write in her journal. She wrote in it that on Friday night she struck her teacher and that it was very unkind, and brought it to me. I then asked her again if she knew that she had not told me that she was sorry. She said: 'Yes. I was just going to tell you that I am sorry, and that I have resolved to control myself.' Told her that I was very glad that she had made such a good resolution. 'I shall never strike you again. I am so earnest to have my excellent teacher happy always. I hope you will not think of the bad thing any more, for you are my best teacher.' Mr. Lawrence then came and we were obliged to go downstairs. Laura was gentle and good. We did not stop after dinner as usual to

speak with Mrs. Smith. Laura asked, 'why?' Told her it was better for her to think than to talk, and besides my head ached sadly. When I spoke of my head the poor child threw her arms around my neck and put her head on my shoulder, saying, with an almost distressed countenance, 'I am so sorry that your head aches to think so much about me.' 'I promised mother that I would always be kind to you. Did I hurt you very much?' It was really painful to see her so much troubled, and I did the best I could to soothe her.

"Left her in the evening an hour; when I returned she showed me several little things she had been doing for me, 'to show you I was sorry for doing wrong and that I love you so much.'"

"*Dec. 20th.* Laura has been very good and gentle all the week and has learned very well. Perhaps I have never known Laura to pass so long a time controlling all her little feelings of impatience and trying so constantly to make the day pass pleasantly for me as well as for herself. In the afternoon went to the city without Laura and was unexpectedly detained for several hours. When I returned found Laura had occupied herself with repairing some of my clothes 'to show me how she loved me and how grateful she was to me.' Spent a very pleasant evening talking with her."

Turning from the simple story of Laura's struggle for better things during the year 1845 to the history of Boston, we find the city greatly stirred over the annexation of Texas, and the consequent extension of the slave-holding area. On the 4th of July Robert C. Winthrop gave his famous toast: "Our country, however bounded," which paved the way to his future



vote in favor of the Mexican war, and to Dr. Howe's consent to stand against him as the candidate of the Conscience Whigs in the election for Congress. Charles Sumner, who till then had held aloof from public life, on the ground that the strife of politics had seemed to him "ignoble," had entered the field of active politics in which he was to take so noble a part, his change of heart dating from "the Convention at Faneuil Hall, which Daniel Webster had at first promoted, and later ran away from." . In 1844, the fugitive slave, Lattimer, had been sent back to the South. The curtain had risen on the first act of the twenty years' drama in which Dr. Howe was to play an active part. It is not surprising that in Miss Wight's entry for December 13th, we find it set down that Laura did not find him in his office, whither she had gone for a lesson.

XI

1846

ILLNESS — SHOWER-BATHS — THE NEW ENGLAND CONSCIENCE

DURING the year 1846 Laura's health continued to fail for some time, and "she walked without a shudder upon the brink of the grave." Dr. Howe never lost hope, however, and by judicious treatment she was brought safely through the crisis. Sea-bathing and riding were among the restoratives used. But her studies were necessarily interrupted by the state of her health. She was dissuaded from pursuing them, and also from following exciting trains of thought.

In Dr. Howe's Report for this year all these matters are set forth at greater length. He also explains the reasons for which her religious education was somewhat delayed, namely, because to her the subject of religion was of the most exciting interest, and he felt that if allowed to dwell too much upon it at this time, her life might be the forfeit.

In this Report, Dr. Howe also takes occasion to state his position with regard to the religious instruction of Laura, and of his blind pupils in general, who were each sent to the church selected by their parents or

themselves, and also with regard to the printing of books on religious subjects in raised type.

From the pages of this Report, and of Laura's and the school journals, we are able to trace the unfolding and beautifying of her character under the benign influence of her gentle teacher and companion. Says the school journal: —

"*Jan.* 1*st.* Laura was full of glee this morning. 'I am so very happy.' Why? 'I have resolved to be so good. I am so happy to be alive.'"

Miss Wight thus describes Laura's repentance after an outburst of temper due largely to the frail state of her health at this time.

"During the afternoon and evening the anger of the morning was not absent from Laura's thoughts. At one time she asked me if I would give her some little thing that I had received from home. She did not take it although I said 'yes,' but a tear was on her cheek as she said: 'Why do you wish to make such a wrong girl happy?'

"At first I was almost in despair, for when I spoke to Laura I was in one of my happiest moods, and such an outbreak on her part seemed the deathblow to all my hopes for the future; but it is not so. I have always felt that Laura came out of these troubles with better feelings and more knowledge of herself than before, and it has been more than ever so today, and Hope and Faith have taken the place of Despair. Almost an excuse for L. may be found in her present state of health. For the last two months she has been obedient, generous, self-denying, at times a little irritable for a moment, but soon recovering

herself. She has learned many new words and phrases, but she has not done as much as I expected in school. I do not know how far to ascribe it to my own incapacity or to her state of health. But I have frequently passed over lessons entirely, or only mentioned them, when she seemed too nervous to attend to them. It is only two days since Laura wished to talk about Miss Swift, and her conscience seemed to reprove her severely for her treatment of her. She asked if I thought she loved me as well as Swift, and added: 'But Swift taught me five years.' I can see now one reason why Laura had so little love for Miss S. Her teacher must almost incessantly advise, check, or point out little faults to be corrected. Almost every one else with whom she has intercourse may leave out all these unpleasant subjects and speak only to praise and flatter. The result might be different if the correction could always be made in the best possible manner, for it seems to me a natural feeling to regard those who labor most to make us better as our truest friends.

"*March 10th.* After breakfast we talked for an hour and a half about different motives. She said: 'I do not like to do wrong; why do I do wrong so often?'"

During the summer of this year Laura paid the visit to her parents to which she had so long looked forward. It was between three and four years since she had been at her old home. Miss Wight accompanied her. Laura had been making such an effort to overcome her own faults, and to be amiable, that it is not surprising to find that she was a little inclined to judge others, as in the instance given below, where she speaks to her teacher of the conduct of her mother, a busy practical woman, almost overburdened with work and cares.

Later Laura's affection for her mother became stronger and stronger; she learned to understand her much better than at this period. Her desire to set a good example to her younger brothers is pleasant. She again saw her faithful old friend, Uncle Tenney, and once more wandered with him for the last time in the old confiding way.

"*Hanover, June*, 1846. Laura came to me much excited. Her mother had been punishing Collina, and her mother did not smile often, etc. Reminded her of her mother's numerous, perplexing cares, and she seemed partly satisfied. After thinking for some time, she said, 'Christ was the happiest man, he was always so good.' 'Do you think he used to cry and fret when he was a little boy?' 'Was he happy all his life?' I replied that he must have been happy because he was so good, but he was sad too, sometimes, because so many people were ignorant and wicked. 'Why did God send Christ to live on the earth?' 'I think my two sisters and Milo are very happy to be with the gentlest and kindest being.' 'Do you think of God when you pick berries and when you pick flowers?' Laura has before spoken of her deceased sisters and brother. She came one night and said: 'My mother has nine children.' I asked who they were. 'Three children died and are in Heaven.' Her mother said she had not mentioned the subject to her. Afterwards she told me that Catherine Donovan told her in Lurena's room that her two sisters were dead. Laura appears very amiable and attentive to every one's wants, and exerts herself in particular to do everything in her power to add to my comfort and happiness. She sometimes asks me if she sets her brothers a good example. She evidently feels that she is an older sister.

"It was pleasant to see Laura with Mr. Tenney; she seemed to have entire confidence in him. During each visit that he made her she would wish to go to the barn in quest of eggs, as she was accustomed to do when a child. She would take his hand and go off alone with him with a childish confidence that I have rarely seen her manifest towards a gentleman. Though they never found any eggs she was never tired of going. Sunday night Laura's brother brought her a rose. She brought it to me expressing great delight. 'God is very kind to give us such fragrant, beautiful flowers.' 'Did he make this flower for *me?*' pointing to herself with emphasis. Answered that I was sure that he intended that she should enjoy the beautiful flowers and all the pleasant things about her. After further conversation on the same subject Laura said: 'I will write some new things for my brothers, to make them more wise.' She sat down and wrote the following very rapidly on a slate: —

"'I hope that you love God very much for he is so kind always: who supplies us with such beautiful flowers and many other things in the world. I love him extremely much he is so benevolent.

"'You must exert yourselves to think of him how good & kind he is & that he loves all of his children & to have them do what he wishes them, we will all be very happy with him if we are always good & right as long as we live always.'"

Finding Laura still unfit to pursue her ordinary course of study, Miss Wight decided to take her to Wayland, where the atmosphere of the Wight household was one of quiet, well calculated to soothe the young invalid, while the conditions were such that she could take her share of domestic work, thus helping others

and herself at the same time. "Plain living and high thinking" was the key-note of Laura's education from the very beginning.

Shortly after her arrival at Wayland, Laura wrote to her mother: —

i was very sad when you left me at enfield i felt almost homesick to go back with you i constantly imagine what you are doing every day. today i thought that you were baking two kinds of bread and pies this morning and at ten o'clock you were preparing luncheon for the family. i am visit [ing] wights ma now. i assist her very much as i did you. she baked an indian pudding twice like you but not quite as nice as yours. it reminds me of your nice pudding. i hope that collina is much better and more easy child. i hopd you would recollect to put the present in johns plate on his birthday. it gives me a great deal of pleasure to think of you all. you will exter [exert?] to write a letter to me and send it by merchant for i am very earnest to hear from you and the rest of family. do you wear a gingham dress often. i keep the apron very nicely so as to remember you and can knit much on the finest edging which you purchased for me at lebanon. . . . wight taught her ma how to make sweet bread like yours but she thinks it will not rise good because she never made such bread. but wight is very sure it would. please ask my dear brothers to write to me as often as they can. . . .

my affectionate friend adieu.

l. d. bridgman.

"*Sept.* 10*th. Thursday.* Talked with Laura about our mutual dependence upon each other. Told her that God did not intend we should think only of ourselves, because

he had made us so that we could not be comfortable and happy without the assistance and sympathy of those about us. Laura soon asked sadly: 'Why did God make me if he knew I should have so many faults?' I replied I thought he wished her to correct her faults and enjoy a very happy life. Asked her if she had not lived many happy hours. '*Yes*.' And why are you not always happy? 'I do not always feel right and do right.'

"Laura has seemed very well and happy today. At first she was unwilling to take the shower-bath, but I told her it was good for her and I hoped she had courage enough to endure the disagreeable feeling for a minute. She laughed and said she was very brave, and went in very resolutely. . . .

"While we were walking she wished to tell me some curious dreams that she had a few weeks ago. 'I dreamed I wrote a letter to God; and I tried very hard to get some one to carry it. I told him that I wanted to come to visit him very much. I dreamed that I was in Heaven once and saw God with my eyes.' . . .

"I feel today that if Laura's health improves she may acquire an almost perfect character."

In a letter to her friend Lurena Laura writes under the date of October 14:—

14th. of Oct. 1846.

My dear Lurena, — I wrote a letter to my dear Mother last Sunday in the P.M. I had two letters from home on the 16th of Sept. They said that my mother and oldest brother Addison were taken ill with fever for eleven days and two sisters were unwell and they had no girl to take care of them except my father and young John. Mother did not leave her chamber for a week, nor sit up only to have her bed made. When she was

better she put on a dress and entered the kitchen to see about the dinner. Father was having a fine new carriage to be made which is worth $150.00.

The lads are going to school with Mary this fall. You must write to me very frequently for I am very earnest to hear from you and am extremely desirous to know what occurs to prevent you from replying to me. I fear that you forget me. And regret very much that you will never regain your health again. Is your journey beneficial to the health. We take a cold shower bath every day but I dislike it on cold weather but I go in it with courage and alacrity so that Wight commends the pleasure of my taking the cold bath. Wight is my excellent teacher now. She has been with me a year and six weeks. I love her very much and dearly. When shall you come to make me a visit? I have not seen you for a year and four months. Dr. and Mrs. Howe and children abandoned S. Boston last Wednesday to Bordentown and will visit Mrs. Mailliard until next term. Her name was Miss Annie W. before she was married. She is my very dear friend. Did you know that Dr. went to see you last month in Providence but you were absent then so he could not call upon you. I think you like to travel and enjoy your visits very much I can sympathize with you I spent a day with Mrs. Hart on the 4th. of Sept. She was very healthy and her son was also. I have acquired the art of making many different baskets with borders. I shall make many baskets to be disposed of.

All our friends are very well. Miss Jeannette is living with Mr. Wales in Dorchester. She is not very healthy this year I hope you will write me a long letter as soon as you have received your letter. I send a great deal of love to you and all of your friends. We confine our-

selves to our nice chamber furnished etc. I remember that you once slept with me in my narrow bed in J's chamber, and we staid together every day in your own old room. Can you walk with crutches now? I hope so.

Do you often take a ride? Miss Paddock is the girls teacher and they love her very much. We go to call upon Mrs. Lamson every week in her new house. Do please to write to me very often. Oliver is very well and happy.

from your affectionate friend

L. B.

Lizzie Alden, to whom allusion is made in the following entries in the school journal, was a child of ten years of age; she was nearly blind, and entirely deaf, having lost her hearing at the age of seven, but retaining her powers of speech.

Dr. Howe says that she showed indications of uncommon intellectual capacity, but was also endowed with a strength of will, and violence of temper far beyond her years. He says further: "This case seems to confirm the opinion formed by observing other blind-mutes, that the occlusion of the two great avenues of sense is apt to prevent the harmonious development of the mental and moral powers, by perverting the energies of the system to the undue development of the animal nature."

Lizzie made rapid progress in her studies, and for a time, was somewhat under Miss Wight's charge. A year or more later, we find Laura teaching Lizzie for an hour every day. Her comments on pupil and lessons,

made in the new rôle of teacher, are quaint and amusing.

"While talking with Lizzie Alden," says the school journal, "I perceived that two of her front teeth were almost crowded from their places by two fully grown new ones. The teeth were loose, and I tried to prevail upon the child to pull them out and told her that it would make her teeth grow better. As an illustration I requested J. Fletcher who was sitting by Laura to ask her to let Lizzie see her teeth. Half smiling but very firmly Laura answered: 'I will not mind. I must be firm.' I could scarcely credit that could have been her reply, for it was so unlike anything I have seen in L. for a very long time, and she had been good and happy all day; but when the reply was repeated I asked Jane to have no further conversation with her and she soon left her. I was much engaged with the little girl and her mother, but seated myself by L. several times. She was not inclined to talk much, evidently disturbed but trying to throw off all appearance of it. Went with her to the exercising-room. She tried to swing Lizzie but did not seem strong, indeed she has not been quite as well as usual today. She said: 'I wish you would not talk so mournful; try to be as happy as usual. I cannot help loving you dearly; I love you so very much I like to tell you sometimes how much I love you.' After tea she said: 'Dr. said he was glad to see me so merry — How can I be merry? — Does Dr. ever ask you what makes you sad? Did he ask you why you were not as merry as usual? Did Mrs. Alden ask you why?' etc.

"'Why am I compelled to do wrong sometimes? Why does Oliver not do wrong as often as I do?' Oliver cannot do many things wrong because he is deaf and blind. 'Why do some people love to do wrong?' We talked in

this manner without any direct mention of the wrong of the afternoon; she was even more than usually attentive to all my wants. I saw her lip quiver as she laid ready all things that I should need in the morning, but she could not bring herself to acknowledge her fault, and she said good-night without any explanation."

"*Dec.* 18*th.* Visitors at eleven. Mr. Amos Lawrence and his son Dr. Wm. Lawrence, and friend Major Lawrence. On hearing the title of the latter Laura said with much emphasis: 'Tell him I hope he will never fight.'"

"*Monday, Dec.* 21*st.* Laura's seventeenth birthday. She was unusually sober — did not take much interest in her lessons; at last she told me the cause of her uneasiness: 'I was fearful that I shall not be able to see Lurena as much as I wish.' Asked her if she thought I ever denied her willingly an innocent gratification. 'No,' she replied, very decidedly. I then told her I had not changed and that she might feel confident that no one would willingly deprive her of an innocent pleasure. After this conversation she was as cheerful and happy as ever Went with Laura to see Lurena in the afternoon."

"*Dec.* 23*rd.* Dr. Wayland came to see Laura; he asked many questions, and seemed very much pleased with her. He read a story that she had written, as easily, he said, as if he had written it himself. He asked if he might take a copy of it for his son. Laura told him she would send it to him for a Christmas present. Before he left the school-room he wished to give her a dollar and a half to purchase a Christmas present for herself. She decided that it would give her more pleasure to expend it in the purchase of presents for her friends. The afternoon was spent in the selection of presents; among others she remembered a little girl who was sick, Lizzy

who was deaf, Mrs. Clay's little girl who was lame. There is nothing more beautiful in Laura's character than the love and pity she shows for all the afflicted, however uninteresting they may be to her in other respects. When she met poor Harriet, the negro, she would shrink from the touch of her hand, 'it was so bony and strange,' but when she knew that she was sick, would remind me to go and see her, and was anxious that I should do every thing possible for her — bought some nice fruit for her, etc."

"Christmas day. Laura was merry all day long; she said she was so happy to think about Christ — how kind and good he was."

Only three blank-books containing Laura's diary for this year have been found. These cover the period from Jan. 1 to March 19, 1846, when the entries come to a sudden termination, in the middle of the volume. The journal was probably abandoned at this time, owing to the state of her health. It contains quaint transcripts of stories from the Old Testament, and from the history of the United States, also of her lessons in physiology and mental philosophy, Miss Dix's book (apparently on natural history) and Sandford and Merton. It also describes one of her numerous visits to the home of her teacher, in Wayland, near Boston.

"1*st Jan.* (1846). I studied arithmetic before our breakfast. Afterwards Wight taught me about bible. Cain was a farmer and Abel was a shepherd. There was a man named Noah who thought [he] would build an ark that was made for a boat could float on the water and he had many kind of animals and birds put in to an ark so

that they might not be destroyed by the deluge. There was much rain for forty days and forty nights. All animals and men on the earth killed of except those of them were alive in an ark. Noah opened the window to see if the flood had all gone and when the water was entirely gone down then Noah sent a dove out in the open air to see if there would be anything that could be seen, but soon a dove came back again tired, and the next time Noah sent a dove again. At last he came back to him with some green leaves in his bill. Noah was earnestly glad to see him again. He thought how good and kind God was and he thanked him for taking care of him and his wife and three sons Shem Ham Japheth."

"2 *Jan.* Abraham was born and he was very good man, there was famine in Cannaan so Abraham and his wife Sarah and Lot went to procure food in Egypt. Abraham was very rich in silver and gold, but they could not live together because they had many flocks of sheep to be fed in Cannaan. But Abraham told Lot that he might go to some place to live where he chose so he went East. There were many people who were not dressed as we do, but in summer they wore different kinds of shoes without stockings and their feet got very dirty in walking. It was requisite for them to be washed every day. I studied philosophy about blood in our bodies and how we digest food. Heart is very strong bag and it makes blood go all over us. Our stomachs digest food and it makes it chyme which has many small holes, then takes it out called chyle. We went to exercise till eleven. Then Wight taught me geography and history. In the P. M. I wrote and worked and then we went to walk in the exercising room for an hour. In the evening we were engaged and had visitors."

"9*th Jan.* Miss Wight taught me about bible. When

the princess went to bathe in the river she saw that Moses was very pleasant and pretty baby in a basket made of bulrushes took him in her lap. She took care of him and fed him. When Miriam saw one of Moses sister, the princess holding him asked her if he wanted some milk, yes said the princess, so Miriam ran to his mother and brought her, she was exceedingly glad to find her son alive. When Moses was grown he was educated by princess and he grew very wise and intelligent and good man."

On the 12th of March, little Julia Howe completed her second year. We find Laura planning to give the child pleasure, and getting out her dolls once more. Later in the day, they ride on the pony's back, Dr. Howe, no doubt, forming part of the procession. He was extremely fond of riding, and was himself an excellent horseman. His children were all taught to ride, at an early age, the beloved father accompanying them, and at first holding a leading-rein, until the neophyte gained confidence. Laura of course could not learn to guide her pony, which was always led by a seeing person.

We find various references to her rides in her own and the school journal. Thus Miss Wight receives word that "Doctor" has taken out the pony and is ready to give Laura a ride. She wishes Laura to get ready quickly, as he is waiting. People living in the vicinity of the institution remember to this day seeing the odd spectacle of Laura riding on pony-back.

Miss Paddock informed the writers that the pony

was a Shetland, given, together with a pony carriage, by some friend. In this vehicle, Laura was driven about. She occupied the back seat, Miss Tallant (one of the teachers) drove, and Miss Paddock herself ran behind like a footman!

Among the best of Laura's letters this year are these written to her mother and Mr. Tenney.

Eleventh of Oct. — Eighteen Hundred and Forty-Six.

My dearest Mother, — I was very much delighted to receive the letters from you and Addison on the Sixteenth of Sep at dinner time But I felt very sad to know that you were both invalids for so long [a] time with the fever, but I was glad to hear that you were all much better. Have you regained your health entirely this fall. What ailed your health. Has dear father buried all bad vegetables so that the air will become much purer and more healt(h)ful, and more beneficial to the lungs. i hope he has buried them. Have you obtained a new neat and kind servant to assist you. do all the children go to school. I am very hopeful that they will be very succes[s]ful and diligent in school. and that you are pleasantly establ[ish]ed with the new kitchen. Have you received a letter yet. Miss Wight teaches me a few lessons every day now afterwards We make preparations for a cold shower bath and a ride on the excellent poney in the a.m. A shower bath is very beneficial to the health of the body — should you not like to attempt it. and see if it will do you all much good. I go into the bath with much courage and alacrity so that Wight commends the pleasure for my taking it. I hope Collina is not so petulant or cling to you as much now as she used last summer.

I have acquired the art of making baskets with different borders. They are to be disposed of — making baskets is my favorite employment. I came home with Wight last evening to stay with her Mother until Tuesday. I am enjoying my visit constantly, and have been to church this p. m. I think of you all every day. I send a great deal of love to you and Father and brothers and sisters and Mr. Tenny and am very well.

From your dear daughter

Adieu L — BRIDGMAN.

6th. of Dec. 1846.

MY DEAR MR. TENNY, — It is a great while since i have written a letter to you. I was sadly disappointed in not receiving a letter from you as you informed Merchant that you would reply to my letter as soon as you were disengaged from your employments. I felt absolutely sure that you would fulfil your promise in writing, but I am very fearful that you forget of me too much to write any time and desire very earnestly to know what has occurred to prevent you from writing. A week last Wednesday my dear teacher Miss Wight abandoned me at the institution and departed at half past eight o'clock and arrived in Wayland at one. She found that her family was just dining then. My very dear friend Jane Fletcher, and her teacher Miss Paddock, took much charge of me until she returned on the 30th of Nov. at noon. On thanksgiving I had a great deal of pleasure with my friends who staid with me and brought me my meals up stairs in our room. I went to see the green house with Miss Tallant in the P.M. on thanksgiving and saw a profusion of plants and flowers. I wish you could see them for they are very beautiful and fragrant. The weather was intense cold and the wind was fleet and

violent. I had a great many friends in Boston, and in many other towns who endear themselves to me by their love and kindness and benevolence always. Wight teaches me many difficulties every day. I had a letter from Addison and Mother last Monday saying that they were very well. I rejoiced much to hear from home. I should be the most delighted to receive a long letter from you as soon as you can be at lesiure to write to me. Are you very well now. We send respects and love to you and are both in very good spirits.

Adieu. from your dear friend

L. BRIDGMAN.

On the 24th of September of this year, 1846, Dr. Howe issued a call for another Faneuil Hall convention to protest against sending back poor "Joe," a fugitive slave, to New Orleans. John Quincy Adams presided, Charles Sumner, Wendell Phillips and Theodore Parker were among the speakers, but the chief address, Mr. Sanborn tells us in his life of Dr. Howe, was made by the doctor. Mr. Emerson was not present, but wrote a letter expressing his sympathy. "It is high time," he writes, "our bad wealth came to an end. I am sure I shall cheerfully take my share in the ruin of such a prosperity, and shall very willingly turn to the mountains to chop wood, and seek to find for myself and my children labors compatible with freedom and honor."

Laura knew the great men who took part in the meeting, but we find no mention of it in her correspondence or diary. Now and again we come upon



some echo of its spirit, like the ghost of a faint perfum
in the packet of time-yellowed letters. That wa
before the women were awake to the significance o
the struggle, which began in words, and ended in war
Mrs. Howe herself, though three years married, did no
attend the meeting, and has no very distinct remem
brance of it.

XII

1847

DEATH OF MR. TENNEY — BIBLE LESSONS

EARLY in the year 1847 Laura received news of the death of Uncle Asa Tenney. Her effort to put on mourning for him, her inquiries about his last days, her desire to visit his grave, show how much she was affected by the loss of this old friend. Uncle Asa's thoughts dwelt upon Laura to the end. He began a letter to her which he had not the strength to finish, and wished he had money to buy her a present.

His decease gave her a greater realization of death than she had ever had before. We find her thoughts continually dwelling upon it; with a shudder, she expressed the hope that she should not be sick before she died; and at another time she asked whether there were any people on the earth who were afraid to leave their bodies.

It will be remembered that when, a year before this time, Laura began to study the history of the Old Testament, she asked few questions although she was very much interested in the subject. Now, however, when her teacher began to read the New Testament to

her, all was changed; she asked so many questions that Miss Wight felt it necessary, after a time, to divert her mind, as she was growing nervous. We find a good account in the school journal of Laura's lessons in the New Testament: —

"*Jan. 4th.* At last she asked: 'How did God tell the first man about himself?' This was a plain question, and one that I could not easily answer. Told her that I did not know exactly, but that God gave men minds capable of thinking of him, and some very good men had many thoughts about God in their minds. 'And did they tell each other and each other so that all the young children might know about God?' And I told her at last Christ came, and he told the people much more about God. 'How long has God lived?' My answer puzzled her apparently — she sat thinking, holding my hand still for more than a minute; she was trying to grasp Infinity. She then said slowly: 'Why can we not think how *very* long God has lived? . . .'

"The more I see of Laura and Lizzie, the more fully am I convinced that the true way to improve character is to cultivate and develop that which is good and beautiful in the character, which will itself gradually overpower and destroy the bad — rather than, as is too common, to begin by crushing and rooting out the evil at the imminent risk of destroying at the same time that which is most delicate and lovely in our natures."

"*Tues. Jan. 5th.* It was a very bright, warm day; as we walked Laura stopped and turned her face up towards the sun — 'It is very pleasant. Why does our Heavenly Father let His sun shine on us in our wrong days?' I do not know why she spoke of wrong days unless because, half an hour before, she told me half impatiently that I

spelled a word incorrectly. I asked her if she was well. She said she was, but she has been a little nervous all day, but from no cause except her bodily health. Of late she has been *very good*, not even showing any of those little impatient feelings that we used to see so much when everything was not as she wished it. It is very seldom that she gives me one troubled thought. It seems sometimes as if she had no wrong thoughts; she certainly does not express them in look, word, or act. She had seemed more calmly, quietly happy than I have ever known her before."

"*Sunday, Feb. 1st.* Laura received a letter from her mother containing intelligence of the death of her old friend, Mr. Tenney. As I read the letter her face was at first very red, and quickly pale again. 'I am very sad that my oldest friend is dead — that I never can see him again. But I think he is much happier now, for he was always so good and kind to everybody.' She sat by me in silence, and then said, half inquiringly: 'I think Mr. Tenney can see us now.' She called to mind the many little kindnesses the poor old man had shown her, and thought of nothing else until the bells rang for church, when she prepared to go with me. She had in her possession a crape badge worn by Miss Drew when Harrison died, which she wished to wear."

"*Tues. Feb. 3rd.* Laura still thinks of Mr. Tenney. His death has affected her sensibly. I think besides her regret for him she feels the reality of death more than ever before. She asked: 'Do you think I shall be afraid when I am dying? I do not understand how people feel when they are dying.' Read to Laura the last ten verses of the 5th chapt. of St. Matthew. Her comment on the 48th verse was: 'Why cannot parents give their children pleasure when they have done wrong, as God does? He

makes the sun shine so pleasantly on us in our wrong days.' "

Sunday morning, Feb. 8, Laura wrote a letter to Mary Rogers, of which the following is an extract: —

"I had another letter from home last Sunday. My eldest brother Addison and Mother wrote in one letter to me that my youngest brother John had a few young doves, and that my oldest and dearest friend Mr. Tenny did not stay in his room but a few days at last. He died on the 28th. of Dec. for he was extremely feeble and ill from the cold weather. He was 63 years of age. I feel very sad not to see him again when I visit my Mother. I loved and respected him very much for he was very kind and good who used to take good care of me for many years when I was a tiny child. I was very much attached and grateful to him always. He used to trot me in my little chair every day and caressed me in a great many different manners. We took walks over the mountain and to the barn and other places. Good Tenny used to take me to procure some rasp- and straw berries when it was very warm and pleasant weather."

"*Friday Feb.* 13. Laura went to Dr. Keep's that she might have a tooth extracted. She attempted to take the gas to produce insensibility to pain, but she was very much alarmed when she perceived that it was depriving her of the power of motion and of thought. She fancied she was dying and said she dreamed of God and Heaven while she was without power of motion. Finally Dr. Howe decided that it was best to give up the gas, and Dr. Keep attempted to take out the tooth while she was in the natural state. The poor child manifested no impatience, but must have suffered very much. When we reached home she sat down to her sewing very quietly."

The day after her visit to the dentist's Laura was quite miserable, and her teacher therefore departed from her usual rule, and allowed her to accept some toys that a gentleman presented to her in a toy-shop.

On May 1 the school journal says: —

"Dr. Howe has decided to take Laura's religious instruction entirely into his own hands. Laura returned from her lesson today very eager to talk with me. 'Doctor says I must remember when I read the Bible that there are many mistakes in it. Do you believe there is any revelation? Doctor says some people do not believe it, but there surely is. Why do you not teach me as Doctor does about the Bible?' Replied that we did not think exactly alike about all things. 'Why not?' and she seemed a little troubled. Her color changed, and she looked very serious for a few minutes. 'Why is your manner more diffident and timid than Doctor's when you talk to me about God and the Bible; and when you talk about wrong things you speak more gently and sad and not so firmly as other people do.'"

In June Laura and her teacher paid the usual visit to Hanover. Miss Wight says: —

"*June* 1*st*. Left Boston with Laura for Hanover. We met her father in Concord, N. H. In the course of the journey Laura made many inquiries about her old friend Mr. Tenney, but her father knew but little of the last of his life. 'Would you like to go with me to see the place where he was buried?' she asked of me very sadly, 'for I should like to go. Do you think he was sad not to see me again before he died? I shall miss him constantly. Do you think he can see us now and know what we are thinking about?'

"Laura is more calm and happier than during her visit of last year. Her health is much better, which is one great cause of it. She only troubles me by asking a great many unimportant questions when I am so tired and nervous that it is only by a great effort that I can answer her patiently and pleasantly. The sight of Laura seemed to recall Mr. Tenney to the minds of all the people, and almost every one had some story to tell of Laura when she was a little thing and came to see them with Uncle Asa."

"*June 29th.* Returned from Hanover to Boston. Laura has enjoyed her visit very much, but she made her preparations for leaving with great cheerfulness."

"*July 13th.* I have observed in Laura several times lately a feeling of satisfaction with herself at her own improvement. I have tried to remove this in part by giving her examples of the greatest goodness and excellence that she may feel that there is yet something above her that she may attain, but her natural self-esteem joined to the consciousness of possessing many right and kind feelings often fills her heart with thankfulness that she is 'not as other men are.'"

"*Oct. 18th.* Returned from Wayland where L. has been with me for ten days; she has been joyous as the birds all day long. All who have seen her have been won to love her by her kindness and thoughtfulness of others. She is in fact becoming more of a companion every day, more gentle and joyous, more quiet and thoughtful. I can hardly feel that I am making any sacrifice in being with her now."

This is the last entry in the school journal for the year 1847.

In opening Laura's journal for this year, we are

greeted with a new and pleasant sight, that of capital letters. It was learned from Miss Mary C. Paddock that the blind were not at first taught to use capital letters in writing, as it was feared this might be too difficult for them. With her characteristic energy, Miss Paddock introduced the improvement, and Dr. Howe was pleased at the result. Miss Wight, finding that the other blind pupils were able to use capitals successfully, taught Laura to do so.

The tone of this journal is specially bright, cheerful, and happy. She evidently enjoys greatly the return to health and full activity. She says: "We had such a happy day constantly," "I had many pleasant subjects for meditations," or "I thought much about our families."

The shower-bath is mentioned in the daily record for the summer and autumn, but while she took it regularly during the warm weather, with the advancing season we find oftener the entry, "I omitted taking my shower-bath." The Preisnitz doctrine of the water cure was much in favor at this time. Dr. Howe believed strongly in the efficacy of the daily cold water bath. He established its use in his own family, and at the institution, and continued to use it himself throughout his long life.

Laura speaks often and with pleasure of her rides on the pony. When, for some reason, she does not have all her usual lessons, she says that she is *deprived* of them, and evidently considers it a real deprivation. She often says, with regard to the lessons and stories that were

read to her, "I was exceedingly interested in listening to Miss Wight." There is daily mention of lessons in arithmetic.

"6*th of Jan.* Then she gave me a lesson History about the king Philip & the Indians & the white men & about William Penn who was very kind to all the Indians they live peacefully.

"At ten Wight proposed to me that i could take a fine ride upon a pony it was a very beautiful day and i enjoyed it much. It reminded me of my best Father in heaven. He was extremely benevolent so as to despatch the sun and such a very delightful day."

"18*th Jan.* When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days [of] Herod the king behold there came wise men in Jerusalem from the east They informed him that they had seen Christs star where he was born. When Herod heard of it, he was troubled. he demanded of them where Christ should be, & when the wise men were going to see the young child. Herod said to them. Go and search for the infant diligently. and when ye have found him, bring me word again & then I will go & worship him. Wise men arrived in Bethlehem where Christ was. They rejoiced when they found his star. at last they entered the house and saw Christ with his Mother, Mary. They gave him gifts. gold. mirrh & franklichiness. They fell down & worship him. that they should not go back to Herod but to their own city another way because he might destroy the young boy."

"28 *of Jan.* Miss Wight read to me from History about a great number of different people about the Barbarians — & their poor houses — & their customs which are excessively cruel & about those people who are savages, & the mankind that has 4 classes [races of

men?] I enjoyed my study & other employments very much."

When Laura read to herself "Ye are the salt of the earth" she was puzzled. The following entry in her diary shows how her teacher explained the passage to her.

"29*th of Jan.* I studied Arithmetic very diligently at 8 oclock. & then Miss Wight gave me a lesson from the Bible. a great many people that they are [who are] good or bad who press much salt upon the meat, so it will be good & not decay in 1 or 2 days. but if the salt lost its savor, then the meat would be decayed but not as worst as when the people are not good. Christ assured his disciples, Ye will be good, & have the righteousness you should see God in your mind. You will love our Father most of all in this world. God will bless all his children that they repent of their sins. They will be happier in heaven if they grow better & better constantly —so that our Father will certainly take care of them."

"3*rd Feb.* Miss Wight taught me a lesson from the Bible about alms & prayer. If we say to each other that we are good & benevolent to them: it would make them praise us & that might make us desire to do them much good always."

"8 *of Feb.* My dear teacher Wight read to me from the Bible about the sermon of Christ to the people about being anxious about food & the creatures & the flowers & many other things. We are of much more value than the flowers but they are dressed more beautifully than we are. The birds cannot cultivate the food on the ground but our heavenly Father provides them with the things to eat. Afterwards we had a long conversation about the dentists & their experience about teeth & then Wight

read to me from the History about the Greeks & their wicked custom & about Cecrops of an egyptian: who endeavoured to teach them how to be civilized. & about Cadmus & Lycurgus & all the spartans."

"*March* 10*th*. Miss Wight taught me a lesson in the Bible. it was all in figurative language that was very difficult for me to comprehend them correctly. At recess we prepared ourselves to take a fine walk for a half an hour. The sun disappeared behind the clouds for it continued to rain until Noon.

"After I came from walking I took a cold bath promptly, it suddenly came on me it made me shudder. As soon as Wight & I were at liberty, she listened to my reading & then she related to me a story, it was about little Rachel & her little companion. I meditated of my family & Wights home & a number of my old friends. In the P. M. I have been very busily sewing. We had such a fine ride with little Julia & Florence [Howe]."

The entry for April 7th is given complete, as it affords an outline of her daily life and work, and shows how busy and happy she was at this time.

"*April 7th*. I studied upon the little globe before breakfast I studied Arithmetic very fast at 8. & then Wight read to me from the Bible. It was the disciples who [were] despatched to preach to the jews. I was exceedingly interested in hearing it. We took a delightful walk upon the boards. It was a very beautiful & pleasant day. I read in the book much more & longer than usual. I read about the old & verenable hermit & little Henry. & the young sheperd & a lamb. I worked upon the chain in the recess until it was time for me to

descend to the school room. Wight taught me a little on the map of europe. & then I had a pleasant conversation with 1 of my friends Mary Thayer in her desk. & walked also out on the piazza until it was dinner time. In the P. M. I completed the chain & then we prepared ourselves to go to Boston at 3. We made a few purchases. We walked home from Boston."

From the following entries we find that Dr. and Mrs. Howe had moved to a house of their own, in the immediate neighborhood of the institution. It was situated on the slope of one of the hills that formed Washington Heights, and commanded a fine view of Dorchester Bay. Mrs. Howe christened her new home "Green Peace," a name that was appropriate to the lovely and sequestered spot, with its beautiful garden and fine trees.

"*July 7th. Wednesday.* In awhile my Mothers cousin Mrs. Hatch came to spend a half a day with me I had a very pleasant time with her in our nice room. In the P.M. I showed Mrs. Hatch the house where Dr. Howe used to live. She was interested in examining the things."

Laura speaks of writing to Lady Strachan, perhaps with regard to her own contributions to the fund for the relief of the sufferers from the famine in Ireland.

"*July 15th.* At nine she read to me about Marco and Forrester, and their visit at the farmers and the beasts and many pleasant worlds. I was exceedingly interested in listening to her. At ten she proposed to me to com-

mence writing a letter to lady Strachan. At quarter of twelve there wer[e] a few visitors who came to see Wight for an hour. Wight taught me a lesson in geography for a while, and then I wrote for the spectators."

"*July* 16*th*. At ten I commenced writing a long letter to my friend Miss Dix and completed writing at half past eleven. Little Julia Howe came to pay Wight a visit whilst I was busily writing. We went to see Mr. Lawrence but he was absent, so we went to the office for a little while. Afterwards we walked home very leisurely with the pleasure. As we were walking along we met my friend Miss lorings uncle in the street. I had a very happy day long."

"*Aug*. 24*th*. At eight she instructed me about catholics and protestants and monks, and their occupations and their circumstances. At half past nine I took a new lesson with Dr. for a half an hour, he communicated a knowledge to me. He conversed with me about monks, and all people who are sinners and who are christians and the will of god. Afterwards I was obliged to read in the n. History alone because little Julia was with Wight awhile, but she was at liberty to teach me at eleven from the n. History. At twelve I read from the N. Philosophy."

The question of removing the Perkins Institution was at this time taken into serious consideration, and a committee was appointed to find a suitable situation. The rapid growth of South Boston made it seem probable that the institution would be closely surrounded by dwelling-houses. The change of grade had already rendered the position of the building less desirable than formerly, — Broadway and H Street, on the north

and east sides of it having been cut down until the floor of the basement was twenty-one feet higher than the street. It was proposed to lower the streets still more, and the trustees thought it would be better to move away, than to oppose a plan which was calculated to benefit the future population of the peninsula of South Boston. There had also been a good deal of inconvenience in dry seasons from the scarcity of water.

It proved difficult, however, to find another situation so advantageous in most respects as that on Mt. Washington. The city government decided to build a reservoir for the Cochituate water on Dorchester Heights (very near the institution), and it was shown that the grade would not be lowered so much as had been feared. It was finally decided, therefore, that the institution should remain where it was.

Dr. Howe speaks with regret of the removal of the trees which had added so much to the beauty and comfort of the place. It is easy to imagine that the situation was much more beautiful before the change of grade left the northeast corner of the main building standing on the brink of two abrupt grassy slopes as we now see it.

In this restless age, when the churches, shops and museums of man have become almost as migratory as his houses, it is comforting to find the old Mt. Washington House still standing firmly where it was planted years ago. Washington Heights are gone ; the lovely garden of Green Peace with its snowballs and hawthornes, its



black-heart and white-heart cherries, its golden russets and its Chinese junk, lives only in the memory of the children who once played there; but stanch and strong the old institution stands on the high ground overlooking the city and the harbor.

XIII

1848 to 1850

LAURA'S JOURNAL — SCHOOL FOR IDIOTS FOUNDED

LAURA'S journals for 1848, 1849, and 1850 are so interesting that it has seemed best to let them tell the story of this period. Where all is so piquant and original it is hard to know what to quote, and what to omit. Her affection for Miss Wight expresses itself in a hundred endearments. She speaks of her as "My dear Dove," "Miss Dove," "My dearest teacher," "My beloved W." Nothing proves her affection more than the constantly expressed anxiety that Miss Wight should have a vacation. Only those who have known Laura or one in her condition can realize what it meant to her to be without Miss Wight. Her teacher was in truth the light of her eyes, and when she voluntarily parts from her, and urges her to take a much needed rest, Laura makes a really heroic sacrifice of her own comfort and happiness.

Nature gave her, as Dr. Howe has told us, a nervous sanguine temperament; the mental tension at which she lived (the price of her emancipation) exaggerated her naturally excitable temper, and one of the hardest lessons she had to learn was *self-control.* The mystery of this girl's soul is laid bare to us with a

strange unsophisticated frankness. Herself was only known unto herself by the direct interposition of another intelligence.

Other happier beings learn the lessons of life unconsciously. We see, we hear, we speak, and with the three faculties of sight, hearing, and speech we learn how to live, how to think, how to feel, how to conceal, and how to express our thoughts and our passions. This child could but have half lived, had not a soul dowered with a wonderful intuition of the needs of other souls, found out a way to reach her lonely spirit. Much that we learn unconsciously had to be explained to her, and she says things in her journals, which in another would indicate lack of reserve, but which in her case show nothing of the egotism which so often shocks us in the published diaries of famous men and women. Her outbursts of anger are set down without an effort at self-extenuation, and the remorse which invariably follows them is significant because of its simple sincerity. She does not spend herself with self-denunciation but says, "I mourned that I had done wrong."

It never occurs to her to blame Fate, the world, circumstance, those scape-goats on whom so many brilliant sinners pile the weight of their own transgressions; she takes them quietly on her own shoulders and resolves to "cultivate patience" in the future.

One of her greatest pleasures was visiting her friends. When one of these visits is in contemplation we find Laura's journals and letters full of a happy anticipation,

but coupled with the prospective enjoyment we always find plans by which she means to make herself useful. She will help her mother "to prepare a luxuriant luncheon every day," she will assist Miss Wight with the housework, or Miss Rogers with the sewing.

It is remembered that when she came to a friend's house to pass the day or even to make a visit of a few hours, she often asked her hostess if she could do something to help her. When she went to a house where there was a baby she always asked permission to hold the child. Her energetic temperament sought out every opportunity in which it might find expression in action.

"*Jan.* 10. As I was roused from slumber I thought that it was 5 oclock I wondered to find the fire extinguished but took the cold bath promptly in the cold room. When Miss Wt. came to my dressing room I was struck with surprise to hear that it was breakfast time. Immediately after breakfast I recited a lesson in Arithmetic. When I could not give up the right answer for a long time I felt discouraged with a smile upon my countenance. At quarter past 8 Miss Wt. repeated reading to me from the History about the second punic war between the Romans & Carthage. At the next recess I went to make the beds. . . . At 11 she instructed me a new lesson from Pierce's Geometry it appeared to me very difficult to puzzle out. . . . I exerted myself to articulate with the people, but I was inarticulatible or incomprehensible. I rejoiced that the basket [on which she was at work] was completed at after 4 o'clock. At last we all went to have a delightful walk upon the piazza, and then went to rock in the chinese junke

merrily." [A delightful rocking boat in which the children enjoyed themselves without stint.]

"*Jan.* 11. Miss Wt. read to me about Scipio's triumph & c. As I was repeating to her what she had read, I got impatient by pinching her fingers — which made her stop teaching at half past 9. I sat by her silently for awhile, & then Miss W went away & left me alone. because I thought that it was best for me to be all alone to meditate upon controlling my bad impluses & making many efforts to do right. At 11 I took the Psalmps book [the Bible] & read in it about the lord's prayer. I knelt down & prayed unto God, it caused me repent very much. At 12 Miss W came to me in my closet, & brought me here. I rejoiced to overcome wrong impluses. Miss W conversed with me all about it.

"Then we went to call upon Mrs. L [amson] When I we entered her chamber she was in her bed with the disease in her breast. I was amazed to see such a tiny infant with her & rejoiced to see it of 12 days old. It was a very delicate baby."

"*Jan.* 13. I felt the watch [lent her by a friend] ring at 4 o'clock. I felt very sure as that it rang at 5 but was mistaken. I was very happy to attend to the fire for us in the night. I took my shower bath promptly, the water made me shudder queerly: for it felt so extremely cold like ice to my body. When I approached the beds to call the lazy people & informed them that it was after 6. They replied to me it was only half past five. I occupied myself in many things till breakfast. . . ."

"*Mar.* 22*nd*. We had a furious & mournful stormy day I had many pleasant meditations 1 day when we were all at our dinner. [She now refers to her first meeting with Miss Wight.] Miss St. my teacher left her dinner suddenly to see a lady Miss Wt. who came to

devote her time to teach the blinds. I could not imagine why St. ran abruptly from the table. When Mrs. H. conducted me to Miss. S room. I met Miss Wt. sitting in a chair very silently. As I felt of her very anxiously it caused her to be very bashful & diffident & shy, but she did go away from me. She had wore a very nice black dress, her sleeves were long and loose with cuffs. She had a cape on her neck, her dress & cape were very graceful in my opinion."

In May Miss Wight was obliged to leave the institution for a few weeks' rest. Laura's appreciation of the great fatigue her teacher endured for her sake is evident. She says, under the date of May 11 : —

"I thought if Wt had a whole vacation as regularly as the [other] teachers and their pupils do then she would regain her health and strength so that she would have such a good resolution to instruct me much. I am very sorry and anxious that she should have a vacation every time the other people do. It is likely that she would have enjoyed her instruction much afterwards. I do not trust that she would have so perfect health and so much strength as myself for it is very unnatural to her. She can be very calm and cheerful instead of manifesting her activity and gayety but I cannot tell how she looks in her sweet countenance. I wish I could discern her expression. I am willing that she should be sedate and much less emphatic but I love to carress her very much indeed. My heavenly Father was so very kind to give me such a nice beautiful friend who has a very warm affectionate loving humble sociable sympathizing heart. I should love to have her visit me as frequently as she could when we are separated f[rom] e[ach] other."

The middle years of the nineteenth century were stirring years in Boston. It was the time of the idealists. The problems to be solved were problems of ethics. Æsthetics were little considered, athletics scarcely at all. The burning questions were questions of morality, not of expediency. In the diaries and biographies dealing with this period we often find Laura's name mentioned. It has been said of her that she furnished a link in the chain of the new science of psychology. No picture of the time is complete without her faint, shadowy figure, standing beside her best friend.

Mrs. Howe gives the best account obtainable of her husband's activities during this period: —

"A new class of unfortunates was soon to claim the helpful attention of our philanthropist. The condition of the insane had long been to him an object of interest. As a friend of Mr. Mann and of Miss Dorothea L. Dix, he had borne his part in the labors and studies which have so greatly modified the treatment of lunatics. In the year 1846, he became much interested in the experiments of Dr. Guggenbühl, which had already resulted in so much benefit to the Crétins of Switzerland. It seemed to him very important that inquiry should be made into the number and condition of idiots in Massachusetts, and he lost no time in bringing the matter to the notice of the state legislature. A commission was appointed by this body, charged with the delicate and difficult investigation. Dr. Howe was chairman of this commission, and its valuable work was chiefly planned and executed by him. The Report, which bears his name, the first ever presented in Massachusetts concerning the facts and causes of

idiocy, was published in 1848. Its appearance made a profound sensation in the community. The Report not only brought to light the fact that in Massachusetts alone the number of idiots amounted to fifteen hundred, but it also gave much information concerning the parentage from which such unfortunates are wont to spring. The frankness of the disclosures made in its pages was disapproved by those who consider it mischievous to lay bare the secret sins of society. Yet all who knew Dr. Howe knew that he would have been the last person to collect and publish facts so revolting as were some of those now brought into notice, unless impelled to do so by high considerations of duty and public service. The existence of a large number of these defectives in Massachusetts was already a mortifying and unwelcome fact. Still more unwelcome were the statements, which showed this condition in the offspring to be in great measure the result of violation, on the part of the parents, of the great laws of health and morality.

"The experiments already made on the other side of the ocean had shown, beyond a doubt, that persons of this most pitiable class are capable of instruction, and even of a certain degree of personal culture. The efforts of Dr. Howe, and the evidences of need brought forward in his Report, induced the legislature of Massachusetts to make an appropriation of $2,500 per annum for three years, to be expended in what it was pleased to term the *experiment* of teaching and training ten idiotic children. A school for this purpose was organized in South Boston in October, 1848, under the supervision of Dr. Howe. Mr. James B. Richards was its first teacher.

"This new undertaking was at first somewhat derided by that class of persons who are disposed to greet with ridicule anything that seems new and strange. 'They are going to educate idiots next,' was a saying received with

laughter and incredulity. One good friend at this time told Mrs. Howe that the Doctor's Report was, in his opinion, a report *for* idiots, as well as concerning them. It is needless to say that the folly of these views soon became apparent, even to the careless people who expressed them. The school soon enlisted the sympathy of all humane persons, and its work has been crowned with a noble success. It has alleviated great misery among the poorer classes, to whom a helpless, mischievous creature, to be fed and looked after, is a burden difficult to be borne. But the misfortune of idiocy is not confined to the poor. Many a family in easy or affluent circumstances has rejoiced to see its feeblest member trained in this school to decent behavior, to harmless amusement, and to useful work, attaining thus, despite the most cruel of defects, something of the dignity which is the birthright of a human being. And in this manner the school for idiots at South Boston,[1] commonly called the School for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Youth, has come to be one of the most solid and respected institutions of the commonwealth. When I tread its sunny corridors, and linger in its pleasant school-rooms, looking into the faces of the young creatures redeemed from a life of degrading criminality or forlorn blankness, I cannot help exulting in the thought that one who was a welcome guest among the rich and great, himself honored, brilliant, and distinguished, had heart and power to help these poor wrecks of humanity, and to bring them within the sphere of all the pure and ennobling agencies which constitute the greatest treasure of civilization."

This new school was at first held in the wing of the institution, which had been set apart for Dr. Howe's

[1] In 1890 the school was removed to Waltham.

own private use. It continued here till 1851, when it was removed to a building near by. Dr. Howe held the office of director of this most important and successful institution, the first of its kind in the United States, until the time of his death.

In 1850 Dr. Howe took a much needed vacation, visiting England and Scotland, where he saw many of his old friends, and going as far as Heidelberg on the Continent. He was absent only a few months, but was able in that time to study the improvements and advance made by certain educational institutions in which he had always taken a keen interest.

Dr. Howe soon found that the blind, always a peculiarly sensitive class, deeply resented the presence of the idiots under the same roof with themselves. They feared that they might be confounded with these weaker brethren, and from Laura's journal we see that she shared the unfriendly feeling: —

"*Sept.* 14. Miss Wight mentioned to me that it was very possible that the Idiots would not come to abide here this Fall. I can scarcely believe that they will be forbidden to come here. I should be so happy to be much more pleasantly established with the whole house if they could prescribe to the Idiots not to have our rooms. I am very fearful that we should assign our nice sitting room in a few days. . . ."

The history of the year 1849 is taken up by Laura's own journal: —

"*Feb.* 23. We first went to the office for a letter & then we went to the state houses. [The annual exhibition

before the legislature was then given by the scholars of the institution.] I was so glad to met the girls in the room which they put their things in. I was highly delighted to see Dr. in the house. I sat in a high enoromous velvet chair opposite the writing desk. I did not recite as much lessons as I anticipated to. I got tired of sitting so silently with W. She sat upon a low cricket beside me. . . . I rejoiced to see the governor Mr. Briggs. I felt the people stamp very loudly & gladly many times. They admired to hear the droll music. . . . I saw Dr. this A. M. He asked me if I should like to go to California with Mrs. F. I replied yes very much. I hate to part with her for so long time."

"*May 23rd.* Mrs. F. has but 4 ladies and 2 sons of her own, she can take very good care of herself & her family all with her. She was very desirous of obtaining 130 ladies to accompany her, it is very reasonable for the ladies not to wish to abandon their dear homes. I can sympathize with them in joy to live with their friends. . . . Mrs. F's wanders in the broad ways & snakes &c. Once Mrs. F. concluded that it would be the best plan for her to endeavor to wear a pair of large boots like a man because she was exposed to wander among the snakes. She wished to guard herself very cautiously against the snakes. As she was walking along, a carriage came by with a gentleman who rode in it. Mrs. F. was alarmed by the approach of the carriage so that she attempted to escape the sight she rushed to the grassy place for the purpose of hidding her boots, until she was solely alone, one of her boots fell off for she ran so swiftly. I think that it was ridiulous & foolish for her to wear boots. I am extremely happy to think that she is one of my most droll & evident friends in the world."

Mrs. Farnham, of whom Laura speaks here and in many other places, was at one time matron at the institution. She was a fine, strong, energetic woman, who had done good service as matron of one of the Massachusetts prisons or reformatories. She wrote a book called *Life on the Prairies*, and it is evidently from this that Laura quotes the story of the boots. She took with her on her trip to California a number of women colonists, and it is to these that Laura refers when she speaks of the "130 ladies Mrs. Farnham was desirous to accompany, and who did *not* wish to abandon their dear homes." At this time there were few women in California, and Mrs. Farnham had a plan of bringing women from spinster-ridden New England to the almost wholly masculine colony at San Francisco.

Here is shown the trend and extent of the girl's studies, — though the extracts space permits us to give are necessarily brief: —

"*November 5th.* She read to me in her bible an account of 1 of Christ's disciples, Judas Iscariot was extravagantly avaricious so as to be very anxious to have so much money. He betrayed C. that he could obtain the money from him. Judas kissed C. so as to convince the soldiers that he was with J. J. went away very much abashed conveying the money. He suppended himself because his conscience reproached him so severely for doing such a very wrong thing. He repented very much because he felt so gloomy to think of the money which he had. he killed himself for his distress & sorrow were so great that he could not scarcely bear to live any longer with the 11 disciples. They chose one of the people

called Matthius who took Judas place. Miss W. read to me in a book about Hungary. There are many peasants who do not own the land, they are compelled to work very hard for 104 days for their lords. The peasants pay their lords one ninth of their produce. they pay their church $\frac{1}{10}$th. They are very ignorant & degraded & oppressed. Many of the Hungarian are Magyars who are the most independent & free to fight or do such things for their pleasure."

Concerning her visit to her home in July, Laura writes to Miss Tallant: —

"I have numerous details to relate to you. My dear Brother Addison came for us at L[ebanon] before 6. We waited a few minutes on the depot board. W. peeped for A till he came up to the other front door. We ran very quickly to meet him. He came to take my hand very gladly. He helped me get into a chaise very kindly. I trembled freely for I was so very deep of joy and also was very tired from riding so long a time. As I rode along by my Mother came to meet me. She saluted me very cordially. My Sisters came to the door with whom I shook hands with all my heart. They were not timid to approach me as they were 2 years ago. As I entered the kitchen My Cousin Emily came and saluted me very warmly. I exclaimed, where are my Brother John and Father. E and I went instantly to the door. E. called for John. As I offered my hand to shake his hand. He grasped my hand much warmer and bolder than he ever did 2 years ago. E. went with me to sit on a very comfortable new sofa in a sitting room. My Sister stood by my side for a long time. Mother prepared us a very palatable supper some new sweet bread and butter and

pumpkin pie, doughnuts, chese, and some very rich milk. I was almost half starved before I had supper.

"My Brothers treated me with greater respect like a gentleman than they used to 2 years ago. I liked their society very much.

"I wondered very much to find the house altered so much. My F[ather] had a new nice piazza made by the door. It was 4 yards long and more than a yard wide. I sat in a chair on it a good deal with the family."

The year 1849 is still remembered as the season of the dreadful famine in Ireland. Large sums of money were raised in the United States for the benefit of the starving Irish, and Laura, always keenly interested in the questions of the day, wished to add her mite to the generous contributions. "At last she had finished a beautiful piece of embroidery, which was sold to the merchants, and the money that was paid for it procured a 'barrel of flour,' and the barrel of flour was sent to the starving Irish, as Laura Bridgman's offering to their poverty and woe."

Writing in 1849, Dr. Howe speaks at length of Laura for the last time: —

"It has not been thought necessary to publish every year an account of the mode of instruction pursued with Laura, because there has been no material change from that formerly pursued and already published. . .

"It may seem strange to some to hear of a girl who is blind and deaf and dumb, and shorn of half the other senses, being cheerful and even gay and frolicsome. Nevertheless, so it is. There are few persons so light-

hearted, so cheery, so full of mirth, so ready at any moment to laugh at a joke or join in a game at romps, as Laura Bridgman.

"But what is her idea of fun? Precisely that of any other young person who has a like mental constitution, who has the sentiment or the disposition to mirthfulness. . . .

"Then there are her pure affections, still more abundant springs of enjoyment, from which the deepest draught can produce no moral intoxication. She loves her friends tenderly and indulgently. She never forgets them, but speaks of those whom she has not met for years with earnest interest. To their virtues and praises she is ever sensible; to their faults and their detractions she is indeed blind and deaf. Few persons are less exacting in their requirements, and less censorious in their judgment, respecting their friends and acquaintance, than she is. Indeed, I do not recollect ever hearing her speak censoriously or unkindly of any person. Miss Wight mentions in her journal that Laura has occasionally spoken of the faults of some of her friends with sorrow, but not in a detracting spirit. . . .

"It has ever been a subject of anxiety with me to have her furnished with opportunities of exercising these virtuous dispositions in the various offices of charity and love, knowing well that they need exercise, just as much as do the mental faculties. A man may as well expect that he can come to understand the '*Mécanique Céleste*' without early exercise of his mathematical powers, as expect to comprehend fully the Sermon on the Mount without previous training of his feelings of charity and love by actual exercise of them. . . .

"She has not been indoctrinated into any particular creed or form of religious belief. Faith she has in God,

aye! and love, too, — that love which casteth out fear. Her veneration, which showed itself spontaneously, has been so directed upward to the Creator and Governor of all things, that she lives in consciousness of his protecting presence and loving care. His laws are his angelic messengers, ever hovering over us, — not armed with whips and scorpions, to avenge themselves, but charged to win us upward by love and persuasion. Laura begins to understand and revere these laws, and thus her religious nature is developed without the aid of catechism. More than once it has been seen that the thought of God's presence and love, occurring in moments of irritation and discontent, has soothed her into placid peace and content. She often says, with a joyful and loving look: 'Our Father gives us all these things.'

"In childhood, while her mind was beginning to grow up towards the light of knowledge, and to put forth its timid tendrils to twine around some points of belief which should be its support through its after growth, then I wished that those tendrils should cling only to what was firm and durable. I tried to keep out of her reach all pestilent catchwords and sectarian shibboleths. I tried to train her up according to what seemed to me the will of her Creator, whether written in a book or manifested in nature; but I did not care that she should know too early the name which men give to their notions of his attributes, whether it be Jove, Jehovah, or God. Having full faith in the religious nature of man, I could no more doubt that, with the growth of her mind, the religious capacities and dispositions would show themselves, than I could doubt that an acorn I had planted would grow to be an oak rather than a hemlock. I was not anxious to pull it up to look at its roots, or to twist and bend its twigs that it might grow in any particular form. I wished

to encourage in her the growth of those virtues which seem to be the elements out of which the religious character is afterwards formed, — veneration, trust, and love; conscientiousness, ideality, hope, and the like. As for the particular form of belief which she should adopt, I had less care.

"I supposed that when, by the action of her perceptive faculties, her acquaintance with facts should become sufficiently extensive, then her mind would begin to put forth its higher powers, and generalize the knowledge that had been furnished to it. I wished to avoid the common error of giving a creed first, and the elements out of which faith ought to be formed afterwards, when the form of belief was fixed. I trusted that the free elements of thought would crystallize around certain natural points of belief, and I did not care to hasten the process by introducing any artificial nucleus to give special form to the future faith. Nor was my trust disappointed. . . .

"It was a touching and beautiful sight to see this young soul, that had lain so long in utter darkness and stillness, as soon as the obstacles were cleared from its path, begin to move forward and upward, to seek and to own its Creator, God. It was as if the lost Pleiad, brought back again to her native sphere and under her native influences, should begin to move onward with graceful sweep, and, joining her sister stars, renew her circling homage around the central throne of light. Her intellect had done part of its work; it had brought God to her mind. . . .

"Laura, by her experience, has enforced the lesson taught by thousands before her, but so often unheeded, — that no theory of instruction can be perfect which overlooks the intimate connection and mutual dependence

which God has established between the body and the mind. To keep this connection ever in view, seems, to some, low and grovelling; but it is only false pride which makes it seem so. In the eye of God, that notes every falling sparrow, there is nothing created great, and nothing little. He gave us the stomach as well as the brain; the one to digest food for the body, the other thoughts for the mind; and he coupled pleasures and pains, to mark our obedience or violation of the conditions of his gifts. The ills we suffer from abuse of the stomach are not more manifold and manifest than those which follow abuse of the brain. The plethora or leanness, the risings and sinkings, the flush or the pallor, the craving or the nausea, the pains, the palpitations, the tremors, or whatever other ailments follow abuse of the first, have their counterparts in the consequences which follow abuse of the second; in thick-skinned stupidity or thin-skinned sensibility, in passion or apathy, in weak credulity or weaker skepticism, in timidity or in rashness, in oddities, irregularities, and the manifold forms of monomania and insanity.

"Laura's case has been watched, not with the purblind eye of affection only, but with the aid of such light as physiology could give; and it has been seen that the condition of her mind and her affections was closely connected with the condition of her physical system. Let it not be supposed that her usual gentleness, her affectionate disposition and her cheerfulness, come altogether from a happy constitutional temperament, for it is not so. On the contrary, she inherits a constitutional disposition to irritability and violence of temper. The nervous system is the predominant one in her physical constitution. When this is disordered, its tendency is to destroy the equanimity of her temper, and it requires a mental effort to prevent its doing so. . . .

"My hopes of Laura have been, in some respects, disappointed; but that is clearly because they were unreasonable. Some important considerations were overlooked; such as the hereditary disposition, the deranged constitution, the undue development of the nervous system. The result, however, has been to give an increase of faith, amounting to conviction, in the efficacy of wise measures for moulding and shaping character. Native dispositions and tendencies and peculiarities may never be eradicated or entirely changed; but, by repressing some and encouraging others, by removing this temptation, and bringing in that inducement, the young and tender mind may be trained up to strength and beauty.

"The disturbing forces are various and strong, but the native tendency towards good is uniform and everlasting. The corrupting influence of vicious associations is great, but the purifying influence of virtuous associations is greater. I now see, with pain and sorrow, how some unfavorable influences might have been kept from acting upon Laura's character: but I see also, how, under ordinary circumstances, a person inheriting the mental peculiarities that she does — with imperfect health, wearing her nerves upon the outside, as it were, and so sorely bereaved of the senses through which come most of the material pleasures of life — would almost certainly be selfish, querulous and sad, whereas she is generous, uncomplaining, and even happy. . . .

"'I am confident,' says Miss W., 'that with me, or any one who loved her, she would work all day long patiently for her daily bread. Now and then, indeed, she speaks sadly of the time when she must leave the school and do so.'

"This leads me to speak of a subject about which there should be forethought and preparation; to wit, the

means of her support in the future. She understands the worth and the importance of money, and begins to be desirous of possessing it, not as an end, but as a means. It would have been easy to conceal this knowledge from her, and some regret that it has not been done, lest it shall destroy to her some of the beauty and poetry of life. But it is a truth and reality, and there is no true poetry and beauty inconsistent with a knowledge of these. It never occurs to her that her friends may die, and she be left to the charities of the world, or that its charities are ever cold, for she has known only its loving-kindness; but she simply feels a desire for independence. She knows very well what this is; she perceives what a difference it makes among her friends and acquaintance. Some of them are wealthy, some are poor; and, though she cares not for wealth, she would shun poverty.

"She knows the cost of rich shawls and fine lace, of precious stones and jewelry and furniture; but no display of them ever seems to affect her appreciation of the owner's worth. As yet, she has escaped the disturbing influence which wealth, and other hollow and factitious distinctions among persons, have upon the opinion and esteem in which they are held. She is no respecter of things artificial or superficial. The absence or presence of 'the guinea's stamp' alters not, in her mind, the value of the metal that is in the man. No display of wealth or luxury can dazzle her, though it may be perceived by her. Even beauty of person or sweetness of voice fails to affect her. The seductions of the smile and of the eye charm not her judgment into sleep. The speaker must drop, before her, the masquerade of soft smiles and sweet tones, which impose upon others, and his words have weight only according to their real worth.

They must be signs of feelings and deeds, and, if they tally not in every particular with the things they represent, they are thrown aside as counterfeit and worthless coin.

"She meets the Governor of the state as quietly as she does the most ordinary person; and she would meet the Queen of England just as quietly, though she might perhaps raise a curious hand to feel if she wore her crown. . . .

"Her father is a respectable farmer, and a man of some worldly inheritance, and he would gladly give her the shelter of his home for life. She loves her parents and her brothers, but she could not find in their remote village the means of continual culture and improvement, which are to her the bread of life, and the appetite for which grows by what it feeds upon. She desires to possess what she knows to be the key to many of the pleasures and advantages of life, to wit, money; and is beginning to gather it together in her small way. She works constantly, making bags, purses, etc., which are sold, and the profits paid to her. It is evident, however, that she cannot earn enough, by ever so diligent use of her fingers, to give her a competence. Other means she has none, though she sometimes, with pleasing simplicity, says she has. In a late conversation with Miss Bremer, Laura asked her, with perfect simplicity, whether she found that writing books 'paid well.' 'Pretty well,' was the reply. Upon which Laura eagerly rejoined: 'Do you think, if I should write a book, it would pay well?'

"Perhaps, by a little effort on the part of her friends, money enough might be raised to buy for her a life annuity, which would place her beyond the reach of pecuniary want, and secure to her the attendance and companionship of some young lady, who could be to her what Miss

Wight has so long been. Laura will do what she can, diligently and cheerfully, to perform those duties and labors of life, of which every conscientious person should discharge his proper share. She asks no one to do for her what she can do for herself. She wishes no one to be her menial or servant. She has already done some service in her day and generation, by setting forth in her deportment, under her sore afflictions, the native dignity of the human character. She has shown in what degree the spirit is dependent upon the senses for its manifestation and enjoyment. She has shown how little the factitious and arbitrary distinctions of life are necessary to happiness. She is, however, utterly dependent upon human sympathy and aid for the continuance of her happiness, and even of her life. She can appeal only as she has done, by the mute exhibition of her helplessness, for that sympathy and aid. Hitherto it has been proffered with eagerness and in abundance. May it never be withheld; may an hour of need never come to her; but may new friends be raised up to her, when those who now watch over her with the tender solicitude of parents can watch over and comfort her no longer upon earth!"

XIV

1850–1852

LIEBER ON LAURA'S VOCAL SOUNDS — RETURN TO HANOVER

AMONG the famous people with whom Laura was brought in contact was that remarkable woman, Dorothea Dix. Dr. Howe was Miss Dix's right hand in her work for the insane of Massachusetts, and she makes frequent mention of him in her letters. It was he who presented that wonderful memorial of hers to the legislature of Massachusetts.

At that time (1846) Miss Dix made Laura's acquaintance. Miss Dix went from State to State all over the country pleading in every legislature the cause of those helpless citizens who could not lift their voices to plead for themselves.

Laura writes to Miss Dix: —

"I was very glad to receive a long letter from you the 7th of Aug. I thank you most sincerely for the card which you sent to me. I am very glad to think of your very pleasant acquaintance with Miss Bremer. I trust that she will meet with the very good and pleasant people at Cape May. I prize my book very highly which Miss B. presented me with."

In the year 1859 Dr. Francis Lieber wrote an account of the vocal sounds of Laura Bridgman, which

was printed by the Smithsonian Institute and is to be found in Volume II. of the *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*. It should be read by those whose interest in Laura's case is more purely scientific than human. These extracts are given as embodying the thoughts most interesting to the general reader.

"Laura utters a loud sound of *o*, with a strong aspirate, inclining almost to the sound *f*, which might be written somewhat in this manner, 'Ho-o-ph-ph!' when she is highly excited by wonder. We do the same when the laws of propriety do not prevent us from giving vent to our feeling of amazement. . . .

"Frequently I have heard Laura expressing a feeling of satisfaction by a subdued tone, somewhat between chuckling and a slight groaning. . . .

"Laura cannot hear her own voice; nor can she perceive the tones of others. She could not, therefore, learn to modify, vary, and articulate them according to a developed language, which is the successive work of many and long periods of civilization.

"The second great obstacle for Laura was, that she did not perceive the effect produced, in each case, by her sounds upon others. The idea of a specific force and value of a certain sound, which directly leads to the conception of the name or word, and facilitates all the means of designation, and of combining these means, could not easily, and never perfectly, appear to her.

"Lastly, Laura was positively interrupted in the formation even of her imperfect and elementary phonetic language, as I have stated before, in order to make her a being of intercourse in our society — in order to attach her as a living member to the community of civilization. This could not have been done had she been allowed

freely to indulge in the harsh and grating sounds, which excited souls utter forth through a throat untaught and unbred, so to say, by the harmony of developed civilization in which we move.

"Laura has near sixty sounds for persons. When her teacher asked her, at my suggestion, how many sounds she recollected, she produced at once twenty-seven. Three of her teachers, Dr. Howe included, stated to me that she had certainly from fifty to sixty. . . .

"All the sounds of Laura now designating persons are monosyllabic. Not one of the names thus bestowed by her consists of a composition of two syllables, each of which separately might designate another person. Nor does she use the same syllable differently uttered, in the Chinese manner, for different persons. But this monosyllabic name is repeated several times; for instance, Foo-Foo-Foo; or, Too-Too-Too. She has no name for Foo-Too. All impulsive utterance is probably at first monosyllabic, and the aid of the ear, as well as phonetic intercourse, may be necessary to connect different syllables in order to designate one idea. In the constant repetition, Laura resembles children and uncivilized tribes. Most of our nursery names for animals consist of repetitions of the same syllable, while the languages of savages abound in reduplications of the same sound. . . .

"Very few of Laura's syllables can be written with our inadequate alphabet. This is natural. . . .

"I think, however, I can say that the sounds of F, T, Pr, B, Ee (German i), and *Oo* (French *ou*) are prevailing, together with the sibilant S. The sound L, I discovered in one semi-guttural tone only, which might be approached by writing *Lull*. I also observed the sound Pa-pa-pa (for one of her best female friends), Fif-fif-fif,

(for a very lovely friend of hers), Pig-pig-pig (for a female teacher of hers) and Ts-ts-ts (for Dr. Howe). I have also frequently heard her utter a sound between F and T. When she did not like to be touched, for instance, by boys, who often did it in a sportive mood, she would repeatedly utter F — generally in an equally sportive spirit; for, Laura is very fond of a joke, and greatly enjoys good-natured teasing.

"Many of her sounds are gurgling, though not disagreeably so; others consist of a chuckling, and in general I would say that the throat and the lips seem to be the organs which she chiefly uses. The tongue is often pressed against the palate, producing a full, round, yet dull sound, which I cannot write. Vowels are very little used, and if so, generally indistinctly. The clear sonorous vowel in speaking and singing requires the ear and long civilization. Savages do not make frequent use of fine open vowels; and a bold singing from the chest succeeds to nasal singing at a very late period only. All Asiatics to this day sing in this twang-chant, and so do the modern Greeks."

The summer vacation of 1850 was spent by Laura and Miss Wight at Hanover. Both teacher and pupil enjoyed the visit. They rambled about the country gathering flowers, and following the wandering course of the little brook, from which Laura had received her first lesson on the division of the earth's surface into land and water. She enjoyed the visits at the old farm and found Harmony Bridgman's light pastry and "india cakes" as good as ever. Still she was glad to go back to the institution and announces her return in a formal little note to Dr. Howe.

Oct. 17th, 1850.

"My dear Dr., — I am very glad to think of your arrival in Boston. I am so impatient to see you once more. I should be most happy to receive a visit from you here on Saturday.

"You can pass 2 nights with us but it is impossible for we will start from H. on Monday if it is very fair.

"I shall hope to see you on Thursday.

Yours truly,

Laura Bridgman."

This letter is written on small and dainty note paper of the fashion of the day, and is the best specimen of Laura's chirography found among the many papers and letters that have been examined. Under the same cover, and written on the same old-fashioned stationery, is a letter to Dr. Howe from Miss Wight who was on the point of leaving the institution to be married to Mr. George Bond.

After her first friend, Uncle Asa, and her first teacher, Dr. Howe, Miss Wight must be considered as the most important factor in Laura's intellectual and spiritual development. Their friendship was a very deep and tender one; it breathes from the letters and journals of both pupil and teacher.

For some time before their engagement, Miss Wight was in the habit of receiving visits from Mr. Bond. She shared this and all her other pleasures with Laura. The young man was very kind to the afflicted girl for whose education Miss Wight was toiling so faithfully, and something happened which has often happened

before. Laura fancied that Mr. Bond came to see her. This child, whose life was guarded from all evil, was not spared the pain of hopeless love and jealousy. The secret of that lonely heart was at last discovered by her more than sister. It seemed best that she should be made to understand that in this thing too she was not as others are, that she could never hope to fill the high office of wife and mother. When this was explained to her gently and kindly, her whole face changed and her trembling fingers spelt out the words: "Am I not pretty?"

There is nothing more striking in her whole history than this simple incident. Much of human growth is by pain, and while the thought of the hopeless love that tortured her is infinitely pitiful, one feels that without it she could never have attained the full stature of womanhood. One after another her friends and companions were wooed and wed; she always showed interest in the preparations for the wedding, and the subsequent "going to housekeeping." Mrs. Lamson tells us that on one occasion a bridal trousseau was laid away in the closet of Laura's room. Hearing a noise late at night Mrs. Lamson came in to find all the dainty garments spread neatly out. "It is eleven o'clock, why have you so many clothes about?" she asked.

"I have been trying them all on!" said Laura.

Mr. Bond had gone as a missionary of the Unitarian Church to Hawaii. In the autumn of 1851 Miss Wight sailed for California where the pair were mar-

ried. Laura was in despair at parting with her teacher, and mourned for her early and late. She always speaks of her as "my best teacher." In a letter to her mother (Jan. 2, 1851) she says: —

"I hate to go without my most constant friend Wight. She kept weeping many times till she left me the 9th of Nov. She gave me a very beautiful & pure breast pin, just before I parted with her. I do not know how to govern myself while my best teacher visits in Portsmouth until next Spring. I love her half as much as if she was my wife. I did not know that my best teacher was to leave me so shortly until the day before she left me. I shuddered so much & worried sadly. I could not credit of renouncing my best wise teacher so soon."

After Miss Wight's departure Miss Paddock devoted a good deal of time to Laura; we are indebted to her for many of the anecdotes and incidents given in this book.

In the year 1835 Dr. Howe had given a lecture on the education of the blind before the "American Institute," the meetings of which correspond to what is now called a teachers' convention. At the close of his address he invited those present to visit the institution. Among those of his hearers who accepted the invitation was Mary Paddock, a young girl of fourteen, who had come from her home in East Dennis, Cape Cod, to visit Boston.

In speaking of Dr. Howe as he appeared at this meeting, Miss Paddock said fifty-five years later: "I was much struck by his manner and voice. His

manner was quiet, and yet it impressed one. He was very handsome."

When she visited the school, which was then on Pearl Street, she was struck most of all by the fact that the scholars were made to *think*. Ten or twelve years later Miss Paddock entered the institution as a teacher, and from that time until the last day of his life, she remained Dr. Howe's faithful assistant and friend. She served him in various capacities, first at the institution as teacher and amanuensis, later as a confidential friend and a member of his household; and last, as his tireless and devoted companion and nurse.

Miss Paddock was a woman of a rare and interesting character. She showed an unselfish devotion for the friend to whose service she devoted the greater part of her life. His children remember her with a profound affection and gratitude. Her small, energetic figure, elastic, tireless, swift of foot, deft of hand, her finely modelled head with its wealth of rich auburn hair, her fresh face with its regular features and kindled brown eyes, her cheery, ringing voice, are all indelibly impressed upon their remembrance.

She is one of the foremost figures in the memory book of "lang syne" and when its pages are turned back to the old days at Green Peace and Lawton's Valley, her face looks out from many a leaf. Her loyal affection, her energetic administration of such details of the housekeeping as were intrusted to her, her quaint phrases, her persistent and finally successful

efforts at mastering the rules of whist in order that she might fill the fourth place at the card table, are remembered affectionately and gratefully.

Miss Paddock made several visits to Laura's home in Hanover. It must have been shortly after Miss Wight's departure, while Laura was staying with her parents that Dr. Howe learned that some of Laura's family contemplated taking her about the country to give exhibitions, and to sell her autobiography. This idea was most displeasing to the doctor, and being unable to leave South Boston at the time, he despatched his faithful lieutenant, Mary Paddock, to Hanover, to bring Laura back, and to endeavor to dissuade the family from the proposed plan.

She arrived at the farm late at night, and the next morning after breakfast and the family prayers were over, Mr. Bridgman said to his wife, Harmony: "Well, marm, we had better tell Miss Paddock what we have got in our heads about Laura, because she will know what doctor's opinion would be."

The scheme was then unfolded, and the energetic envoy cried out: "Oh, I *know* that doctor would disapprove of any such plan."

"That's enough, then," said Mr. Bridgman. "Dr. Howe has made Laura what she is, and we have no right to do anything contrary to his judgment."

In spite of the pressure brought by Mrs. Bridgman and the sons, the plan was abandoned and Laura was carried off in triumph to her beloved "Sunny Home" at South Boston.

Miss Paddock and Miss Wight were greatly attached to each other, and spent much of their leisure time together. They often noticed as they sat talking of an afternoon, with Laura near by knitting at her purses, or her pretty lace edging, that she would suddenly lay down her work and begin talking of the person or topic they had been discussing. This was before the matter of thought transference had been seriously dealt with. The two young women were so much impressed by the frequency with which Laura took up the subject of their conversation when no possible clue to it had been given to her by word or act, that both believed the girl often knew what they were talking about, and agreed that it was best not to speak of any matter before her, of which it was well that she should remain ignorant. It is possible to bridle the tongue, but not so easy to control the thought, and the two girls often said to each other, what they would have been abashed to say to elder and wiser people, that Laura always knew what they were thinking of, *if* their thoughts were strongly concentrated upon an idea or a person.

On showing a letter of Laura's to a gentleman who had made a study of handwriting as an indication of character, the first point noticed was, the extraordinary intuitive perception of the writer. A strong artistic sense and love of the beautiful were also noticed. That she was naturally endowed with these qualities, her love of beautiful objects, her efforts to write poems, her fine sense of the fitness of things seem to prove.

During one term, Miss Paddock, who was a teacher

in the girls' school, devoted herself entirely to Laura. This was shortly after Miss Wight's departure, and the new companion had the misfortune of being constantly compared by Laura to her beloved Wight. A certain mirror which had before hung upon the wall was placed by Miss Paddock upon her bureau. Every day Laura hung the glass up as it had been in Miss Wight's time, and every day Miss Paddock remonstrated with her and put it back on the bureau. Finally this fragile bone of contention was removed once and for all. Laura had hung it up, and a gust of wind blew it against a frame and broke the glass. When she found out the result of her obstinacy she was very sorry for what she had done.

Laura's interest in the current affairs of her own country and of Europe was always very vivid. The career of her old friend and playmate, Charles Sumner, was a constant interest to her. When he was struck down by the cowardly hand of Senator Brooks of South Carolina, she mourned day and night, till she learned of his recovery.

At the Perkins Institution class lines were almost wholly obliterated. The teachers and pupils dined together. The help (there have never been any servants in the establishment) ate in the spacious kitchen, it is true, but no difference was made in their fare, and in buying the household supplies and linen, one grade of goods was adhered to throughout. Miss Moulton, the matron, was even more democratic in her views than Dr. Howe, and since she thought it proper to address

the fireman and the teamster as Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones, it will be easily imagined that her example was followed by the whole household. This wise woman held that respect shown to others induces self respect. The American ideals, the old American ideals of simplicity of living and the dignity of labor, had and still have in this establishment a striking exposition.

Laura's disapproval of tea and coffee and all highly seasoned food was the occasion of many homilies to her friends old and young. She gravely reproves her father for drinking tea, and her teacher for the use of pepper and spice. In her youth we find a lack of perception of the relative importance of matters both temporal and spiritual, but as she grows older she learns to distinguish the vital from the trivial questions of conduct. Throughout her life she was much engrossed with questions of conscience. In the days of her early education when she shared her lessons with the sturdy, unimaginative little Oliver, the contrast between the characters of the two children was constantly shown. Laura's mind was continually exercised about abstract matters of right and wrong; while Oliver was chiefly interested in concrete objects, and actual processes.

One day Laura is told of the predilection of the fox for killing hens, and Oliver is told about a cat. The girl wearies herself and her teacher with questions about the fox's motives, responsibilities, and conscience, while the little boy demands a real cat and feels of its head, tail, and claws.

In certain superficial qualities they resembled each other, by reason of their common lot, and method of education. Both believed for a long time in the omniscience and omnipotence of their teachers. On being given the word *thunder*, and told that it was very high above him, Oliver asked if some one were stamping there, if the thunder was his or his teacher's, and if it could be given to him. Laura's difficulties are to reconcile infinite good with finite bad and to define the limits of human responsibility; while the joyous Oliver asks for nothing but love and fun and an interesting occupation. The first need of this girl's nature was to expand; the first need of the boy's was to act. It must be remembered in comparing the two that Laura was brought more closely in contact with the strong original mind of Dr. Howe, and that she had some knowledge of the great questions of humanitarianism and universal freedom, for which he toiled so unceasingly. She met and talked with some of the first men and women of her time. Sumner, Mann, Kossuth, Dickens, Dorothea Dix, Fredericka Bremer, Francis Lieber, were to her more than names. Something of their influence found its way into the still recesses of her heart, animated it, ennobled it.

Among the pleasant memories of her life was an evening spent at Green Peace in the midst of a group of brilliant men and women. Dr. and Mrs. Howe had given a dinner to Kossuth and Madame Kossuth. Among the guests were Count Pulzky and Madame Pulzky (remembered as the author of *The Red, White,*

and Blue), Longfellow, Theodore Parker, Lowell, George Sumner, Miss Julia Sumner, Miss Katherine Sedgwick and Mr. and Mrs. George Hillard. Dinner was at four o'clock, according to the fashion of the day, and after it was over Miss Paddock brought Laura into the drawing-room. Kossuth, who had never before seen her, was much interested in talking with her. She willingly wrote for him — poor Laura, the weariness of autograph writing was a thing which she found out later in life. After she had answered many inquiries which he put to her, the talk turned from Laura to the then burning question of the independence of Hungary, and the whole company listened while the patriot told wonderful stories of his adventures, drew glowing pictures of the future of that cause for which he toiled and suffered so much. Laura was not forgotten. She sat a quiet figure in the corner, the nimble fingers of the faithful Paddock translating such of the talk as was most comprehensible to her.

This never to be forgotten evening must have been in the winter of 1851–52. Mr. Stillman says in his autobiography that the following year he was sent by Kossuth to recover the crown jewels of Hungary, including the crown of St. Stephen, which the Hungarians held necessary for "the lawful coronation of their king, and with which Francis Joseph had not been crowned." Kossuth, and his colleague, Szemere, had buried the jewels on the banks of the Danube, "employing for their operation a detachment of prisoners who were shot after the concealment was complete . . .

when the jewels were recovered they were to be hidden in a box of conserve . . . carried to Constantinople, from which point I was to take charge of them and deliver them in Boston to Dr. S. G. Howe, the well-known Philhellene." The plot failed, owing, Kossuth believed, to the treachery of Szemere, and the Hungarian crown jewels never came to Green Peace, but fell into the hands of the Austrian Government.

Among the books which Laura enjoyed at this time was the *Life of Mary Ware* read to her by Miss Paddock. Mrs. Goodwin, afterwards Mrs. Charles Whipple, was at this period matron of the institution. She had formerly lived in the family of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and is remembered as a very superior woman, as well as a great friend of Laura's. While they were staying together at Clarke's Island, near Plymouth, Mrs. Goodwin read Laura some of Longfellow's poems. These made a deep impression upon her, particularly the beautiful idyl of *Evangeline*. After the poet's death the following letter was found among his papers.

Feb. 8th, 1852.

My dear Sir, — I will address you. A very dear friend of mine Mrs. Goodwin was very kind who gave me a book from which she read to me. I prize it so highly. I will always think of you when I touch the book which is copied by you.

I am so much interested in thinking of Evangeline who devoted all her time in doing so very much good to the sick & afflicted people during her life. I sympathize with her so far in her afflictions. I love her very dearly.

She is so lovely and sweet. She is one of Christ's very dear Sisters.

I enjoyed myself very much in reading about Evangeline & her most benevolent duties. I should love to meet her with my soul in Heaven when I die on the earth,

from LAURA BRIDGMAN.

In Mr. Longfellow's Journal, under the date of January 23, 1852, is this entry: —

"Scherb came to tea and told me of Mrs. Goodwin's reading Evangeline on her fingers to Laura Bridgman."

And on Feb. 14th he writes: —

"I have a letter from Laura Bridgman the deaf, dumb, and blind, written with her own hand on reading Evangeline."

Mr. Horatio Greenough, the sculptor, says in a letter to Longfellow: "I was delighted with Laura Bridgman's gratitude to you for your poem. It was worth two laurel crowns such as are to be had in the market."

In speaking of Longfellow's poems the other day, Helen Keller said: "I prefer his poem of Evangeline." Some subtle bond of sympathy between their own fate and that of the gentle Acadian heroine surely accounts for the preference of these two very different persons for Longfellow's lovely idyl.

After several months of companionship with Laura, Miss Paddock went into the girls' school-room to read aloud to the scholars. A sudden wave of homesickness for her old school-room swept over her. For a week she combated this, and then she went to the doctor

and told him that she could endure the dumbness and stillness, the terrible silence no longer, and begged to go back to her old work. After this, though she was much with Laura, she never again devoted herself exclusively to her.

The process of reading to Laura was a tiresome one, but her enjoyment of it was so great that her friends and teachers were fully repaid for the pains and time they devoted to it. The reader holding the book with one hand, spelt the words with the other into Laura's palm. Certain abbreviations were agreed upon, to lighten the labor, and to an outsider the rate of speed at which these readings went forward seemed almost miraculous. Laura's expressive countenance was never more interesting than at these times; if the book was to her taste, shadows of thought and flashes of merriment passed over her face, like clouds and sunshine across the stillness of a summer lake.

Her love of order was very remarkable. To watch her dust a shelf of delicate and precious bric-à-brac was a real pleasure. On one occasion when she was passing the day at Mrs. Howe's she asked for something to do; an étagère filled with the most fragile and precious of the family possessions needed arranging, and Laura lightly touching the shelves made herself familiar with the position of each object and then proceeded swiftly and deftly to dust and replace the Greek vases, the eggshell porcelain, the Venetian glass — studying each object with her fingers as she did so. Most of the pretty things have been since broken by

the dustings of a succession of barbaric Hibernian queens, but they were quite safe with Laura.

When she was in her twenty-third year it was decided that she should return to her parents' home in Hanover. Dr. Howe believed that this was the wisest and best plan for her, but the decision came near costing the sensitive creature her life. She was much attached to her parents, and to her sisters and brothers, and it was thought that a share in the household duties would fill her life pleasantly. The quiet farmhouse with its small family proved but a tame place after the varied though regular life of the institution — a very beehive humming with activity, and filled with a thousand absorbing interests. At the farm the children had their duties and their lessons to attend to, the mother was as busy as in the old days, the beloved Uncle Asa was only a memory and there was no one who could devote much time to Laura.

On one occasion during this visit Laura became so impatient with her mother for not talking with her, that she struck her! — and was immediately afterwards overcome with despair at her action. She brooded over it continually and would not be comforted. Miss Paddock, who knew of this incident, accounted for Laura's outburst of temper by the fact that she had no other outlet to her nervous irritation. Other people fret and scold and are relieved by this natural process, but poor Laura's "dumb rages" were the outcome of long repressed nervousness. It would be interesting to know whether she had any misgivings of the future

when she bade good-bye to her friends at "Sunny Home" and went back to Hanover. We have found nothing which throws any light on this. It is certain that shortly after her arrival at home, she lost her interest in life, her appetite failed, and it was soon evident that she was fast going into a decline. Dr. Howe was summoned and found her a shadow of herself, dying of that subtle disease which we call homesickness.

Miss Paddock was sent to bring the poor child back to her real home, to the birthplace of her intelligent life, to the father of her mind. It was midwinter when Mary Paddock arrived at Lebanon, the nearest railroad town to Hanover. The roads were so blockaded with snow that it was impossible to reach the Bridgman farmhouse. Dr. Plaistridge, a good physician who lived near the station, met the young stranger by chance and said to her: "You are from Boston, you had better come to my house."

Miss Paddock was welcomed by the doctor's six beautiful daughters, in whose company she spent the next four days. When at last she was able to push on to Hanover, she found that Laura had not left her bed for many days. The excellent Paddock, sturdy, cheery, full of good tidings, came to her bedside and spelt into her nerveless hands these words: "I have come to take you home." A wave of color surged over the wan face. "When do we start?" whispered the thin fingers. "As soon as you can eat an egg," answered the practical Paddock. Laura had refused all solid food

and lived literally on crust coffee for some weeks, but she ate an egg the next morning.

A week later, and the girl's constant prayer, "to be taken to Boston" was granted. They started on one of those bright cold winter days when the air seems filled with thousands of invisible stinging nettles! Mary Paddock never forgot the look of that wintry New Hampshire landscape with the Bridgman farm-house and outbuildings sharply etched on the blinding white snow-drifts. When Daniel Bridgman carried his frail daughter out of his house and placed her in the open sleigh he burst into tears, and sobbed aloud that it seemed like turning his own child out of doors! His wife, Harmony, was made of a sterner stuff. She stood in the doorway of the keeping-room and admonished him for his weakness. "The child will be happier and better off in Boston," she said.

Before they had covered half the distance between Hanover and Lebanon Laura had fainted. The brave Paddock's heart sank, but she did not dare to turn back. Laura's last words had been — "When shall we reach Boston?" The disappointment might be more than she could bear.

When they reached Dr. Plaistridge's house, the invalid seemed to be in a lifeless condition. She was carried indoors as one dead. She soon recovered and when she found that the first stage of the journey was safely accomplished, she was eager to start upon the second. In a week the doctor gave them permission to go; though Laura's life seemed but a pale flickering

flame, on the point of failing altogether, her indomitable will never faltered. To Boston! to Boston! The cry went up day and night from that homesick heart!

She was laid upon what was then called a saloon sofa in the car, and made the journey in this fashion. Though she was so weak she could not lift her head, she wished to talk; and her fingers flew faster and faster as the train brought her nearer and nearer to her home. Would doctor meet them? Was he glad she was coming? These two questions were repeated endlessly. The day was so bitterly cold, that several of the passengers, among others the president of Dartmouth College, kept relays of bricks heating on the car stove to put at Laura's hands and feet.

Miss Paddock remembered that journey as one of the most trying experiences of her life. She despaired of getting Laura to the institution alive, and when she was at last carried into the little white chamber where she had lived so long, it seemed for a moment that all was over. Careful nursing, affectionate friends, the myriad interests of the beloved institution, however, gradually revived her.

Two years later a second experiment of keeping Laura at Hanover was made. She went home for the summer vacation, but soon after the winter term began word was received by Dr. Howe that Laura was pining and drooping, and Miss Paddock was again sent to bring her back to South Boston; from that time it was a foregone conclusion that while Laura lived the institution must be her home.

XV

1853–1859

MISS MOULTON — LAURA'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

IN the year 1853 Miss Maria C. Moulton came to the institution to fill the position of matron. For thirty-eight years she held this office, which she resigned on account of failing health in the spring of 1892, against the wishes of Mr. Anagnos the director, the trustees, and all the inmates. The character of the men and women whom Dr. Howe appointed to the various positions of trust in his institution was very remarkable. With few exceptions those who served, even in the humblest capacity, proved themselves worthy of association with their indomitable leader.

The history of the Perkins Institution remains to be written; it will prove better reading than that of some royal houses. Many names worthy of respect will receive honorable mention in this record, for not a few noble lives have been built into the institution, of which Dr. Howe's integrity was the foundation, and his imagination the cap.

The institution was a miniature world, governed by certain fixed rules, as rational as the laws of nature, on which they were based. The stereotyped official

routine, which makes life so dreary in many public institutions, was never felt here; the whole social fabric seemed like a garment moulded about the central figure.

In Miss Moulton Dr. Howe found the ideal matron. She brought to the work the love that is strong, the firmness that is tender. As the years passed and the woman's nature broadened and deepened, her sphere was enlarged, her office increased, until the title matron seemed all too poor to express her relations with the children, the teachers, the director himself, who was wont to call her Saint Moulton. In the later time when he was taken and she was left, Saint Moulton was felt by all who had a part in the institution life to be the mother as he had been the father of the blind.

Laura was soon drawn within the cordial circle of Miss Moulton's friendship, and there were few persons she loved so well. In 1854 Miss Moulton arranged a famous Christmas festival, which Laura remembered all her life. Dr. Howe was at this time living with his family in his own apartments at the institution, which he and Mrs. Howe at different periods occupied until the time of the marriage of their eldest daughter, Julia Romana, to Mr. Anagnos, Dr. Howe's assistant and successor. Two of Mrs. Howe's six children were born here, and by an odd coincidence these two were destined to tell the story of the institution's most famous pupil, Laura Bridgman.

The Christmas tree was planted in the middle of the doctor's large drawing-rooms. At a given signal Mrs.

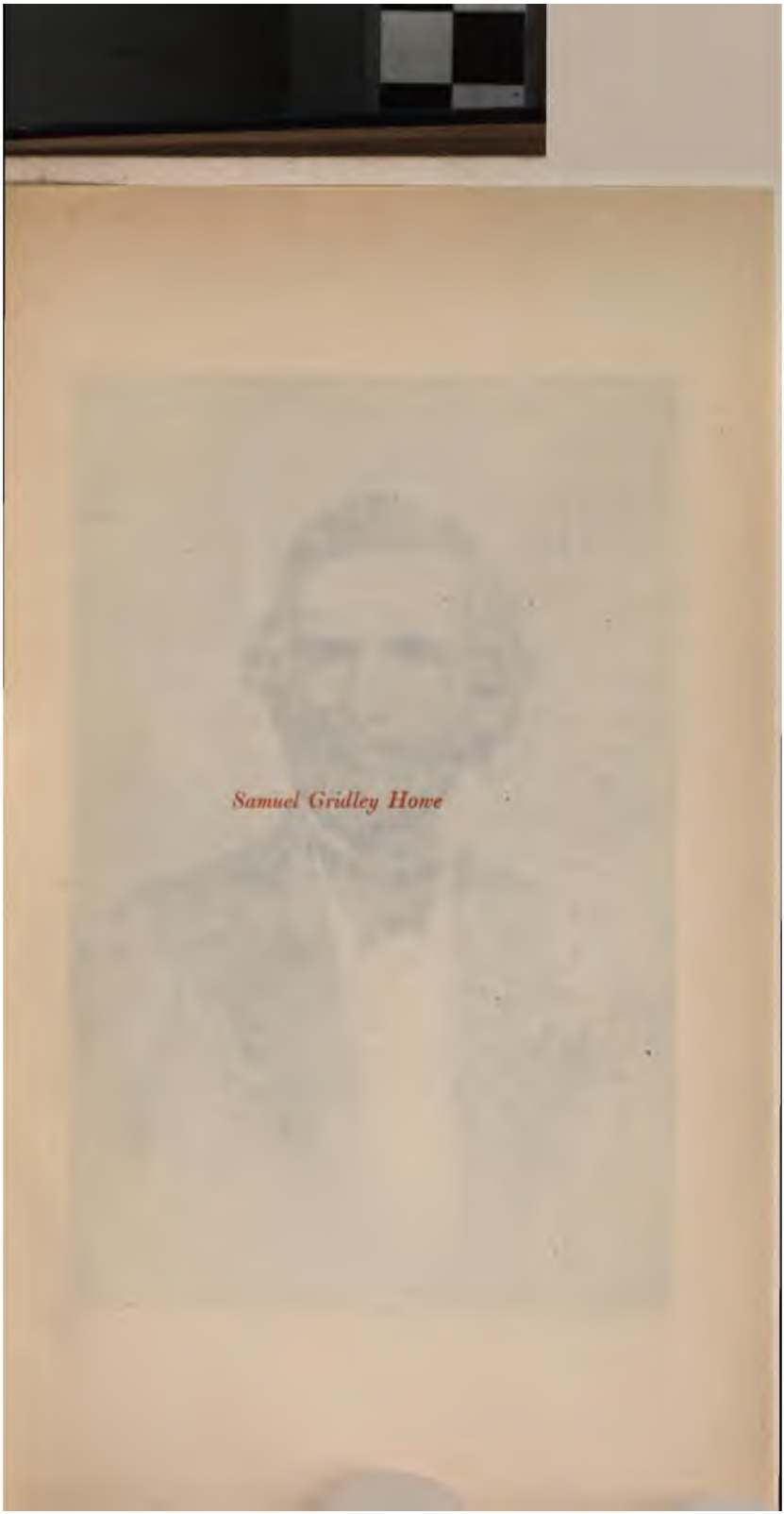
Howe took her seat at the piano and played a stirring air to the measures of which the blind girls marched in two by two. The tree was laden with gifts, and the whole household took part in the happy festival. There were many presents for Laura, but it was remarked that she took as much pleasure in the keepsakes the others received as in her own. She was deeply impressed by the beauty of the tree, of which she received a very vivid idea partly from her own almost seeing fingers, partly from the descriptions of her friends. Laura had made a triumphal entry as queen of the fairies, enthroned in the Howe children's pony-carriage, which was filled with gifts and drawn by a small donkey. The little beast crowned with flowers pattered over the marble floor dragging his light burthen, while Laura gaily dressed in gauze and tinsel waved a tiny sceptre over her merry subjects. The queen was very happy, her pretty pale face was radiant, her lips trembled on the verge of a repressed smile. She was surrounded by her maids of honor who distributed the gifts among the guests. Afterwards when asked why she would not laugh, she said with an assumption of dignity: "It is not proper for a queen to laugh."

In the year 1853 Laura kept a journal, from which we learn more of her friends and less of herself than in the earlier diaries. Now that there was no one person exclusively devoted to her, her interests seem to have become broader, her affections more diffused. While her own mind and that of her teacher were fixed upon her mental unfolding a certain egotism was inevitable.

Her growth is now broader, more human, and less purely intellectual. She is a member of the large family at the institution, and lives on very much the same footing as the rest. She takes part in the writing lessons of the other pupils, makes friends with the blind girls, and spends much time with Miss Moulton, with whom she is occasionally invited to take tea. She has a daily visit from the "noble Dr." and every afternoon a long walk with one or another of the teachers or attendants. Her special education is at an end, very much as it is with the rest of us when we leave school or college; but the larger training, the discipline of life, still has much in store for her.

Laura continued to keep her journal through most of the year 1853.

"*June 25th.* As I was sitting in her huge rocking chair in the even, the noble Dr. came and hailed me most cordially with a few roses in his dear hand he presented to me I enjoyed its fragrance very much more than can realize. He brought some glad tidings to me which delighted my whole frame greatly. he said that he had seen my dear Father at Concord N. H., and that he was a Representative. I rejoice most truly that such an unexpected event should occur concerning my dear Father and my dearest oldest brother A. whom Miss Paddock and Dr. met at 2 different places last week. Miss P. came to welcome me warmly in the very last part of the evening. She announced to me that she saw A. at Hanover and that he was very well. She only had a few minutes in seeing him. He inquired for me naturally. She had just arrived home from a very long trying



Samuel Gridley Howe



journey. She seemed to be so hot and weary. She took tea with 4 blind girls who had been absent with her."

Dr. Howe had just returned from one of his frequent trips through Vermont and New Hampshire, where he had given exhibitions of his pupils before the state legislatures and in the principal towns. Seeing is believing, and the results of these visits were always an increased interest in the education of the blind, and a loosening of public and private purse-strings.

On this occasion the doctor had taken with him four of the blind girls, their teacher Miss Paddock, and Mr. Alexander McDonald. Miss Paddock gave Laura, and, at a much later date, the writers, an account of this journey.

The first exhibition was held in the hall of representatives before the legislature of New Hampshire, of which Daniel Bridgman had recently been elected a member. Shortly before the hour appointed for the exercises, the doctor was seized with a severe chill, always the first symptom of his terrible sick-headaches. His young assistants put him to bed straightway, heaped a quantity of blankets upon him, and while McDonald sat down to watch with the sufferer, Miss Paddock took the children to the state house. The hall was large and difficult to speak in, and the little teacher feared that neither she nor her pupils could make themselves heard. In the middle of the exercises McDonald came into the hall and whispered to Miss Paddock:

"Hurry this through; Dr. Howe is very ill; I don't know whether we shall find him alive."

It was not wonderful that young McDonald should have thought the doctor's life in danger. Most people on seeing him during one of these headaches made the same mistake. The doctor believed these attacks to be the result of malaria to which he had been exposed during the Greek campaign. After the first deadly chill, followed a burning fever, and such racking agony of pain that the prostration and insensibility which followed were welcome to those who knew the regular sequence of the symptoms, though to the stranger it was the most alarming phase of the attack. On one occasion a guest who had been at the house when the traditional headache seized the doctor, offered his services as nurse, and for some hours watched at the bedside. Mrs. Howe and the other members of the household were so familiar with the deathlike appearance of the master and father at these times, that no one thought of explaining the matter to the stranger. They stole noiselessly about the darkened room bringing cracked ice, mustard leaves, chloroform liniment, or hot fomentations as the symptoms demanded, or sat motionless and breathless while he caught a moment's relief in sleep. The visitor took his leave at nightfall and returned to Boston carrying with him the news that Dr. Howe was dying. Early the next morning he hurried to South Boston to see if the patient was still alive. The first person he met was Dr. Howe himself cantering along on his black mare Breeze. He was a

trifle paler than usual, but save for this and a deeper shadow under his blue eyes than was quite normal, the doctor seemed in his usual health and spirits.

To return to Miss Paddock's recollections of the journey to New Hampshire. The morning after the exhibition before the representatives Dr. Howe was so much restored that he sent his party on to Hanover Centre, where an exhibition before the students of Dartmouth College had been arranged, he himself following by a later train. The collegians were much impressed by the difficult arithmetical problems, which the children worked out mentally with astonishing rapidity. At the close of this exhibition Miss Paddock expressed her fear that the recitations before the representatives had not been successful.

"Oh, yes, Miss Paddock, you must have done well, for we have got our appropriation," said the doctor.

The following morning the whole party pushed on to Northfield, Vermont, where the next exhibition was to be held. There was no train, but Dr. Howe, nothing daunted, took the little girls on an engine. The children (Julia Graves, Marion Dunham, Carrie Park, and Jeanette Andrews) were obliged to sit very quiet. Little Jeanette was an active, troublesome child, and the doctor said — we quote from Miss Paddock: "Take that little flibbertigibbet Jeanette Andrews and hold her hands so she can't blow us all up, and I will take care of the other three!" They reached Northfield safely, and at the exhibition the doctor told the people that Jeanette would thread a needle. "Here it is,"

she interrupted in her shrill little voice, holding up the threaded needle, and bringing down the house.

Laura was very fond of corresponding with her friends as well as her family; and letter-writing now takes the place of her diary. This is to be regretted, for it has been impossible to collect many of Laura's letters for this period, though we have secured a large number of a later date.

During the educational period of her life, Laura's mental development kept pace with her spiritual growth. When the stimulating companionship of her last teacher, Miss Wight, was taken from her, she became less intellectually progressive. She had lost the key which day after day had opened new doors to her eager, searching spirit! We find a plaintive note in her letters and her journal that has never been there before! There is less joy in living! Childhood is over, she is a woman now. She still has loyal, loving friends about her, but she is a woman with the responsibility of her own soul in her own hands.

When she left the institution to go back to Hanover, it was as the most interesting scholar that had ever quitted its doors. When she returned sick unto death, it was as a member of its household, to be tenderly cherished so long as she lived, but no longer the object of the all-absorbing interest and curiosity she once had been.

Laura wrote three autobiographical sketches at different times; the one bearing the date February 2d, 1859, is the best and fullest. She was at this

time a little more than twenty-nine years old. Much that she relates has already been told, but even the most familiar of the facts gains an interest from the quaint phraseology and the naïve simplicity of the writer. We have space for but a brief portion of the whole.

"The History of my Life.

"Feb. 2d, 1859.

"I should like to write down the earliest life extremely. I recollect very distinctly how my life elapsed since I was an Infant. But that I have had the vague recollection of my infancy. I was taken most perilously ill when I was 2 years & a half. I was attacked with the scarlet fever for three long weeks. My dearest Mother was so painfully apprehensive that there was a great danger of my dying for my sickness was so excessive. The Physician pronounced that I should not live much longer. my Mother had a watch over me in my great agony many nights. I was choked up for 7 weeks as I could not swallow a morsel of any sort of food, except I drank some crust coffee. I was not conveyed out of the house for an instant for 5 months till in June or July. I was saturated with very bad sores on my chin & neck & on my lowest right leg & other parts of the body. As soon as I began to get a little better it delighted my Mother very highly, who had been so gloomy watching me constantly. I used to recline in a very nice & comfortable cradle for a great number of months. I enjoyed myself so very much in lying in my nest. Many of different persons were very attentive & tender & patient to me whilst I resided with my Parents until I attained not exactly the eighth year. I fancied having a veil drawn along my poor head whenever I lay myself



in the cradle. The light was so very brilliant & striking that I could not bear to see the reflection of the sun shine an instant once, because my tiny eyes were very weak & painful many months. It made the tears flow from my eyes like a heavy shower. I dropped down my head into my little hands as the ray of the light stung my eye lids like a sharpest needle or a wasp. My poor head & eyes continually tormented me so that I entered to the snug bed chamber & staid there for a short time. My Mother used to get up in the night very often to procure a little vial of some sweet oil & bathed my right eye, which soothed & eased it so quickly indeed. She always put a quill with very soft feathers in the oil & anointed my eye very nicely. I rose up in her bed on this occasion. I slept with my dear parents in the same bed. I slept on the right side of my Mother. Once I took a little glass bottle of sweet oil & broke it in fragments. it grieved & alarmed me very much. but my dear Mother was very patient and kind bearing the cause of my mischief. A spark of coal snapped directly upon my neck & the flame of fire spread over my chin from my neck, so they rejoined together for sometime as they were scratched so badly. there is the old scar remaining on my neck & chin. My Mother set me so cautiously in a chair & tugged the chair along the floors on the two hind feet of the chair from the bed room to the kitchen. I fancied to have her draw me backward in the chair very much indeed. My poor feet were wrapped in a poultice & I made a great effort in sauntering so leisurely across the floor. my Mother took hold of my cunning hands to assist in supporting me to walk so feebly. it gave me some difficulty. I was so very restless & unwell that it gave her very great anxiety & trouble continually whilst in tending to me. I had several nurses

who always treated me very kindly & lovingly tenderly. I loved them so dearly indeed. Some one that was hired by my Father used to treat me very absurdly & unreasonably. He would compel me to eat so much more than it was needful for me. it tormented me very much. My Mother taught me how to knit & make butter, iron, wash, &c. I liked to see her make so numerous cheeses, apple & egg & mince pies & doughnuts & all kinds of food which always gratified my appetite very much. I subsisted upon many sorts of berries with most luxurious milk in the Summer. I always had many very delightful merry days, but I felt very sad & painful other days.

"I was very fond of picking fruit during the favorite Summer & Fall with different persons. I reached a great abundance of sour & sweet apples suspending on the branches of the trees. I treaded over them with my feet. I went bare footed many times some times the green grass used to irritate my sensitive feet very badly. it amused me so much to ramble about on a carpet of the grass.

"I exerted myself to let the water pail drop down into the well for the purpose of drawing upward the pure water for my Mother but my strength would not allow me. I enjoyed myself in observing her spin & weave & wind yarns & doing other things exceedingly. She had a couple of carving boards which she meant to rub some very soft things somewhat like cotton wool with between them. She had a very hugh & complex loom. I could not perform the labor for it seemed too prodigious.

"My Mother made some maple molasses by boiling it for a long time, then she took down a very large kettle like a boiler & I was so strongly tempted to dip some hot syrup out of the vessel & taste of it, which was so delicious & pure to my mouth. I love the syrup with food or liquids the most of anything sweet.

"Mr. Tenny was one of my greatest and best benefactors. he loved me as much as if I was his own Daughter. I always loved him as a Brother. I was so much attached to him. He used to lift me up in his arms & transport me from one place to another. I liked to be carried as a little Babe in his great arms. I loved to breath the purest fresh air very much indeed. the air out of the doors was very indispensible to my life. I wore a very nice cloak which I liked very much. I could not talk a single word to him nor anyone else with my own fingers. I only knew how to make them comprehend some of my wishes. I offered my tiny hand unto my dear Mother entreating her that she might know of my want for something to eat or drink. I stroked on my hand for some butter spread on a piece of bread. I could not assure her for whatever I should like for a drink or nourishment because I was incapable of making the deaf alphabet. I was generally satisfied with any kind of food & liquids that they procured for me. Mr. Tenny was very tender hearted & most amiable & affectionate disposition. I was so very happy to stay with him constantly & forever. Whenever he was obliged to start off from me it made me think that he meant to forsake me & I felt very badly to have him desert me so shortly. He did not know how to talk with his fingers for my sake, but he contrived how to make me understand by some signs which he showed me. He used to hail me most ardently by stroking my cheeks always. I could instantly recognize him from the manner of his moving hands & by his feet. it always delighted my heart much to feel him step along, for I felt so much attached to him. He proffered me some straw & rasp berries in a bowl filled with some very rich milk & maple molasses & bread many times. I relished it greatly with him."

Laura passed part of the summer vacation of 1855 with her parents. In that year she again took up her journal, which had been neglected since 1853. The volume is the last of a large set of long thin paper books. The writing is often very faint from her having used a hard lead pencil, but save for this fault, for which she was not responsible, a more neatly arranged autobiographical journal cannot be imagined. There is hardly an erasure, not a spot, save the yellowing tints of time, and very few mistakes.

Her organ of curiosity must have been very fully developed, for it was hard to keep any secret from her. She could give a surprisingly good account of the character and affairs of the other members of the large household. It is not an uncommon practice among people with all their senses to choose some sympathetic correspondent, and pour into their letter to this distant friend all the woes and worries of the past week. These letters serve as a safety-valve, and are of immense value as a means of letting off steam. Laura's letters to her mother are often of this order.

For many years Laura spent a large part of the summer vacation with Mrs. Morton at Halifax. She was always glad to visit this old friend and her letters written from Halifax are cheerful and full of descriptions of various pleasant happenings. She also made many visits to Miss Rogers at Billerica, with whom she always kept up a correspondence. In one of her letters Laura promises to teach her to knit a certain lace edging, and if it takes twenty hours to learn the stitch

she pledges herself to be neither impatient nor vexed, and ends with these words: "I am always mortified when I indulge my peevish feelings to infest my heart."

Laura's letters to her younger brothers John and Addison are very sweet and sisterly. She is full of anxiety about their studies and interest in their play. She tells them such anecdotes as she thinks will amuse them. There is a certain freedom in her correspondence with these boys which we do not find anywhere else; her language is noticeably less formal than in writing to grown people.

Laura was very faithful in remembering anniversaries. She wrote birthday letters to all the people she loved best, and at Thanksgiving and Christmas never failed to send tidings of herself and greetings to her correspondents. Her nimble fingers were quite a source of income to her at this time. She knitted chains, purses, edging, and made lace collars and handkerchiefs. She says in writing to her mother: "I have received a great sum of money $13.00." This was in payment for two chains, a collar, and a purse.

Among Laura's friends was Mr. Morrison Heady, a writer of considerable merit, and a man of an original and striking personality. At the age of sixteen or thereabout, Mr. Heady lost his sight and hearing. In spite of this terrible affliction, his life has been an active and a useful one. His energy and ingenuity in overcoming the obstacles, which surrounded him, are at once an inspiration and a reproach to many in full possession of all their senses. Though he is totally

deaf and blind, he travels about alone on his own affairs, and is one of the most respected and public-spirited citizens of his native town, Normandy, Kentucky. Mr. Heady first saw Laura in 1854, and later in 1859. Their correspondence lasted for many years, and was a source of great pleasure to Laura.

XVI

1856–1872

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES — DEATH OF MR. BRIDGMAN

LAURA'S mother had always longed for what she called "the conversion of her afflicted child." In 1858 while the girl was visiting her parents in Hanover, Mr. Herrick, the pastor of the Baptist church, had a conversation with her, in which she asked him if he believed that the Bible taught that the world would be burnt up.

During the early years of her education, Laura's religious training was carried on under the direct supervision of Dr. Howe. In his Reports for 1844 and 1849 he gives the outlines of the methods which he adopted in this all-important branch of her education. From the time she could understand it, the Bible was freely put into her hands, and its parables and teachings were explained to her; she was taught to pray, to love, and to reverence her creator, and to follow the teaching of Christ. In approaching the subject of her later religious instruction, we wish to express ourselves as convinced of the good intentions of those persons the wisdom of whose acts we are obliged to question.

In 1860 Laura heard of the sudden death of her eldest sister Mary.

Death was not unknown to her. In the darkened days of her childhood, her hand was placed upon the dead face of a neighbor, and later at the institution she had a long conversation with Dr. Howe at the time Orrin died. She grieved over the loss of Mr. Tenney, and "felt very solemn" in talking of the demise of Dr. Fisher, but at that time she was still very young, she had not assumed the responsibility of her own thoughts and opinions.

Laura seems to have been overwhelmed by grief at the death of her sister. What her friends have called her "religious experience" can be clearly traced to this affliction and the influence then brought to bear upon her, in connection with it. Under the pressure of a great bereavement the heart is as wax before a flame. The mind, racked by a new and until now unsuspected agony, is easily turned to some new faith with which, it is promised, it may salve its pain!

The summer after Mary's death, Laura made a visit to a cousin living in Vermont. Here she met Mrs. Palmer, the second wife of Mr. Palmer, the widower of Mrs. Bridgman's sister. Judging by her letters, Mrs. Palmer must have been a kindly, devout woman, though of very limited education.

Mrs. Palmer soon obtained a strong influence over Laura. It was perhaps only natural that she used this influence to induce her to join the Baptist church. On leaving her cousin's house, Laura went to Hanover

where she met Mrs. Herrick, the clergyman's wife, to whom she taught the manual alphabet. She visited the parsonage often, and held long conversations with Mr. and Mrs. Herrick, who completed the work of conversion which Mrs. Palmer had begun. In a letter to Mr. Herrick, whom she addresses as her brother, Laura describes her "religious experience."

HANOVER, July 23, 1862.

MY DEAR BROTHER, — Am most happy to write you. When I learned that my dear sister Mary was dead, my soul was cast down in the hand of God. My heart was almost broken. It was hard for me to bear — God judged it would be right for me to be very much afflicted, on account of my dear sister's death. It was on a Sabbath day in December, that I learned her sad fate. A very dear Christian friend communicated to me the letter, written by my mother, concerning the illness and death of Mary. I burst into tears — I was much afflicted — I could say no word to any one, for some hours.

My dear friend Miss Moulton, remained with me until the bell rang and summoned the pupils and others to morning prayers.

She assisted me to my cozy room; and put me upon my snug low bed. — I was unwell before the sad news was admitted into my mind. — I fell into a state of anguish and dejection. — I was greatly agitated. — I did not feel reconciled for a certain period. It still seemed very sad and hard for me to bear. I felt very forlorn and miserable. It appeared to me, that I was living in a gloomy and dismal world. I did not speak to any one; but continued in my room for a long time. I did not feel myself in the care of God, or the Savior, for weeks. I

had no hope, or trust in the name of God and the Savior.

I did not feel truly happy until the spring after I suffered the sad loss of Mary. I was not devoted, with accord, to prayer until June. It seemed as if I could not be worthy of comfort, or happiness. I thought continually about Mary and myself. In April, I was desirous to review the subject of the baptism of our Savior, Jesus Christ; and asked my mother a few questions, but did not tell her any of my feelings. I felt so timid, that I pondered every word in my heart. I now began to feel more and more submissive in doing the will of God who wished me to obey his Son, Jesus' commandment by being baptized.

In June, I heard Jesus speak down from his throne into my heart, before and after meeting an humble, devoted and Christian woman, in Vermont [Mrs. Palmer] for whom I had a glow of respect and love, because she appeared to have love to God and Jesus and was rich in faith. She wept much when she gazed on me, for joy & sympathy in Jesus Christ.

My heart was opened by the hand of Jesus, and He illumined my heart with glory and light and grace. I beheld his face boldly, granting his Holy Word I felt my soul fall into his hands. My feelings were goverened by the Spirit of God, and Jesus Christ. God taught me to pray and guided my heart in his way.

I began a prayer in June two years.

From your most sincere christian sister,

LAURA D. BRIDGMAN.

Mrs. Bridgman and Mr. Herrick were anxious that Laura should be baptized before her return to Boston in the autumn of 1860. Mrs. Herrick says in a letter

to Miss Wood: "There were some reasons which led her father to think it better for her to wait." These reasons were perhaps akin to those which led Mr. Bridgman on another occasion to submit to Dr. Howe's judgment, in a matter which deeply concerned Laura's welfare. We refer to the proposed plan of exhibiting her, which, it will be remembered, Mr. Bridgman abandoned when he learned that it did not accord with the doctor's ideas, saying: "Dr. Howe has made Laura what she is, and we have no right to do anything contrary to his wishes."

Before she returned to South Boston, it was arranged that she should be baptized and received into the Baptist church in the following summer. She did not return to Hanover, however, for two years, but in the summer of 1862, she received the rite of immersion.

Laura was naturally an extremely religious person. In the letters written before her "conversion," we frequently find simply expressed religious sentiments. After the "experience" there is a distinct change. Her language becomes pietistic and formal. For the first time fear enters into her spiritual life. In her childhood she had been afraid of strangers and of animals. Her dreams had been haunted by cats and dogs and monkeys, but with the higher intelligence of girlhood these terrors seem to have faded away. Now a new and awful fear darkened her soul, the fear of an angry God. Eventually Laura's natural spirituality lifted her above these gross superstitions more than could have been anticipated. She took the golden



Stream where Laura Bridgman was baptized



grain of truth, which is the vital part of all Christian sects, and let the chaff of dogma go, but ever and again we find in her letters and in her conversation a hint of that fear of God which had been ingrafted upon her mind.

So it came about that Dr. Howe's hopes of the development in Laura of the natural religion of the human soul were never realized. Well meaning but unwise persons thwarted his earnest efforts by their misdirected zeal. Her mind was forced into the narrow limits of a doctrinal dogma, which could not fail to mar its natural growth as the foot-gear of the Chinese woman deforms her feet, to use one of his own illustrations of another case. Dr. Howe was a Christian in the real sense of the word; he was not only a believer in, but a follower of Christ. While Laura remained under his religious instruction her heart was full of joy and love and praise of her creator. In his tenderness for the child he would have spared her all knowledge of those human inventions, Hell, Damnation, and the Devil. The person who threw the shadow of these dark phantasms over the joyous aspiring childish soul must have had a strange and sad idea of the duty of a Christian.

At this time the war had broken out and Dr. Howe, who had been an ardent abolitionist and a member of the Free Soil party, was much occupied in the work of the sanitary commission, in which he took so active a part. Always a man of Herculean energy, at this time he worked early and late, and what with

private and public duties had little time to devote to Laura.

If in her grief at her sister's death she could have held the long conversations with him, which at other periods so greatly influenced her, it is possible that her "religious experience" would have taken a different form.

In a conversation with Miss Moulton the question was asked: "Did Laura at this time have the mind of a mature person?" "In many respects yes, in others no," was Miss Moulton's answer. "She was always childlike in being easily amused, easily troubled, and easily diverted from her troubles."

Her friends at the institution remember the days of her conversion and the next ten or eleven years, as the time when she was least agreeable as a companion. She lost her elastic bird-like quality and her old spontaneity of thought and feeling. Her mind became self-conscious. Her conversation, like her letters, was full of pietistic cant. Dr. Howe, a man of action rather than of words, was shocked and pained by this extraordinary change. He has said that he had difficulty in recognizing the girl whose clearness and simplicity of mind had so fascinated him in this conventional and professing sectarian. Fortunately this phase lasted only for a period of years; the time came when Laura measured the people she met by other standards than the familiar question, "is he a baptist?" She realized that a man's life and character mean more than his creed; but this was later, in her first enthu-

siasm to be a baptist meant more than to be good, wise, noble, or generous.

We have found little that throws light on the details of Laura's life during the sixties. The few letters that have been collected give us glimpses of a soul absorbed in self-contemplation. This mood of spiritual introspection lasts for more than ten years. Her interests are withdrawn from her fellows and centred upon herself and her relation with the Infinite. The intensity of this inner life is betrayed now and again in her letters.

(*To Miss Augusta Mulliken.*)

HANOVER Aug. 13th, 1864.

MY DEAR MISS MULLIKEN, — I am very glad to have the pleasure to write you a birth letter which may reach you on Wednesday, as it is your birthday and also Miss Moulton's our saintly sister. I hope that her sitting room may be adorned with flowers splendidly by some dear friends, as it was last summer. How much I wish to see you an have a long time with you. Did you have a very pleasant time at the navy yard. How long did you prolong there. How have you passed the hot summer. It is much hotter & more dusty this term than last summer. The grass was scorched by reason of the hot sun & not being moist by rain. The well was all dried up also brooks. We were obliged to go a long way through the field & obtain much water often. We had a few showers but not as much as last years. It seems to me strange that it did not rain much but God knows what is best & right for all nations & people. Many persons spoke that there would be a famine if God did

not order rain to quench the earth. We have a good many quarts of berries I like them. You will write me a long letter when you can. May you be happy in the holy name of Jehovah. I hope He will bless you with many blessings through your age until He calls you unto His throne of grace & glory. You will take a glorious journey by guidance of His hand to Heaven — Amen

Yrs. truly

L. D. BRIDGMAN.

(*To Mr. Morrison Heady.*)

S. B. July 4th 1865.

MY BLEST BROTHER M. — I wish you a very jubliant day How rejoicing & joyful all people are. having a holiday which the almighty Lord has blest how awful are his love & mercy unto the human-race. Blessed be the holy God of Israel. Do you think it strange in my delaying so long writing to you. You may consider me as a negligent Sister. Yet will you pardon me. My memory lingers to you with others in my devotions. I wish so greatly to welcome my Brother & have a long interview with him. I received your letter with much joy a year ago last Winter. I was ill in bed then. Your letter yielded a sun beam & cherishing to my low spirit. Miss Mullikin undertook to read your letter to me, which was most acceptable to me. My dear Brother Addison came home from the south with his dear Wife in May. I was almost crazy, my soul with utmost rapture in seeing him a week ago last Satr. he called here in my absence a month ago. I was very sad not having seen him as being in Halifax visiting Mrs. M. my first teacher.

May God be with you forever. Ye cast your whole trust in the Lord he will keep you amen.

In the year 1867 Laura wrote the first of those compositions which she called poems. Her friend Mr. Heady had endeavored to explain to her the rules of versification. He was not successful, for there is neither rhyme nor rhythm in her poetry; and yet she was not wrong in calling these effusions poems, for they surely express poetical ideas.

The most widely known of Laura's poems is *Holy Home.* She wrote several versions of this, of which the following is the best.

HOLY HOME.

Heaven is holy home.
Holy home is from ever.
Lasting to everlasting.
Holy home is Summery.
Holy home shall endure
forever.

But earthly home shall
perish
I pass a dark home to-
ward a light home above.
Hard it is for us to
appreciate the beauty
of holy home because
of blindness of our
minds.

By the finger of God
my eyes & my ears
shall be opened.
The string of my
tongue will be loosed.



With sweeter joy in
holy home I shall
see & speak & hear.
What rapturous joy
I shall hear Angels
sing & play on instruments.

In holy home music
is sweeter than honey.
& finer than fine gold.
How glorious holy
home is & still more
than a sunbeam.
When I die. I shall
behold the radiance
of Heaven's blest
mansions.

God will make me
happy when I die.
Jesus Christ has
gone to prepare a
place for those who
love him.
My hope is for that
sinners might turn
themselves from the
power of darkness
to light divine.

The interest excited by her writings is essentially non-literary, it is human and psychological. Having no conception of the value of sound, the quality which we call style was not to be hoped for in anything that she could write. When we remember her ignorance in this respect, her choice of language seems remarkably good.

Laura mentions her father's death, which occurred in the autumn of 1868, in a letter to Mrs. Bond: —

S. B. Jan. 24th 1869.

My BLESSED FRIEND WIGHT, — It is a pleasant and charming even. I am not well this new month of the year. I am less strong than last Winter. I devote my precious time in reading &c. I wish to see you ever so much. My dear Papa died in peace by Jesus the last Saturday of last Nov. my home is half broken I am in deep despair because of not meeting him again on earth. John & Wife never sit & talk with my poor & deserted Mother. I wish to meet her & to comfort her & cheer her up. I mean to hasten home in a vacation & be company for her all summer. dear Papa did not give me anything for my living latter days. I can hope & trust in God & Jesus. it will sorrow my heart adventuring in that sad place. Do write to me. My best love to Mr. B. God bless y[ou]. good ni[ght.]

Yr aff friend

LAURA.

According to the terms of Daniel Bridgman's will, his son John inherited the homestead on the condition that he should give a home to his mother and Laura as long as they lived. The heir's interpretation of this condition was, that Harmony Bridgman, who had for nearly fifty years toiled early and late to build up the family estate and to educate her children, should be deposed from her position of authority and given one room in exchange for the wide pleasant farm-house. Here she was expected to live and to sleep, and here she ate the solitary meals, which were sent up to her.

If she wanted Laura's company, she must share her one poor room with her daughter.

The gross injustice of the will, which, it is but fair to Daniel Bridgman to say, is believed to have been made under the influence of the heir, cut Laura to the heart. She met Mrs. Howe a short time after her father's death, and making that little pathetic sound of grief we all knew so well, said: "I have been disinherited!" A friend writes *à propos* of this unkindness: "That notable woman, Mrs. Bridgman, who had worked, toiled, and delved all her life to earn and to save, was at last rewarded by seeing the property, which she had done so much to create, given to her son, with the injunction to maintain her as a sort of charity boarder or incumbrance to the estate."

Dr. Howe was much incensed by the sad position, in which his old acquaintance, Harmony Bridgman, was now placed. In 1874 he makes the following statement concerning Laura and her mother: —

"I take this opportunity to say that Laura is now about forty-four years old. Her father has recently died; and the little property which he thoughtfully left for his widow, and this, the most dearly beloved of his children, has been very selfishly, ungenerously, and, as I think, unlawfully misappropriated by some relatives; so that Laura and her aged mother must bear such unkind treatment in the old homestead that they continue to live in it only through the lack of means of living elsewhere.

"Laura has for many years contrived to earn a little money by making bead-baskets and other trinkets; and she has the interest of two thousand dollars bequeathed

to her by her excellent friends, Mrs. Abby, and her daughter, Abby M. Loring. She has also a home during the cold season at the institution; but still she barely receives enough for necessary articles of dress, whereas she has a feminine delight in personal ornamentation: she loves to have showy and fashionable dresses, bonnets, and the like, and trinkets for her dressing-table; and it would give me great pleasure to gratify her innocent taste to a reasonable, and even to a little unreasonable, degree.

"Any persons disposed to make any addition to the Loring Fund can do so by remitting to me, or to the treasurer of the institution, with explanations of their wishes."

At one time the great bell of the institution was out of order. This was during the vacation, and the scholars had all gone home except Laura, who had remained with the matron to receive the visit of the British minister. Miss Moulton found that Laura, always the most punctual of mortals, was late in the morning, late at dinner, late at supper. At meal time some one was obliged to go in search of her, and as this gave great annoyance, Miss Moulton told her that her tardiness was very troublesome. Laura put her hands to her ears then spread them before her face. "The bell is gone," she said. "What difference does that make, Laura?" "I do not know the time. I do not know when to get up, I never know what time it is," answered the only person who could not hear the bell, but who felt its vibrations, and missed it more than all the other inmates.

No one had ever thought of giving her a watch until it was discovered that all her life she had longed to possess one. As soon as this was known, two gentlemen, Mr. Robbins and Mr. Heywood, faithful and tried friends of the institution and of Laura, procured her a watch with raised figures, and a hunting-case. The crystal was taken out so that she could feel the position of the hands. Laura was making a visit to Mrs. Herrick at the time, and Miss Moulton took the journey to Troy, N. H., with the sole object of carrying the gift to her. Laura danced about the room with the watch hugged to her bosom, she laughed and twittered and trilled over it, she uttered those short cries of pleasure, which Lieber described, and which were more expressive of joy than much articulate speech, her face meanwhile beaming with rapturous excitement. In a few hours she learned to tell the time, for the next day Miss Moulton had a letter informing her that the mystery of the minutes and the hands was being mastered.

Hearing that Laura felt some uneasiness about her future at this time, Dr. Howe wrote to her mother assuring her that as long as Laura lived, she should have a home at the Perkins Institution. Laura writes soon afterward.

HANOVER Aug. 22d, 1871.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND, — I bid you good morning & hope this day may pass in the bondage of peace for your comfort. Your kind letter came to me a few days ago. You said nothing concerning my gifted watch as though

you don't appreciate nor remember its object. I received a pricked letter from a dear blind friend Mr. Smith at Inst. yesterday. He thinks that the next term will begin the 1st of Nov. Doubt of my returning to S. B. in Nov. or Dec. as they send word for me. Mother had a cordial letter last Winter acknowledging an invitation of Dr. H. & Inst. which is a real home for me to abide there as long as I liked. also I should be entirely welcome to the Inst. It is a year & 5 months since I saw the Dr. & am very solicitous to see him again. I am in hope to visit you in your lovely home ere many years. We had a cold Summer beside a few sultry days. I regret to receive a Fall soon & to dismiss the elapsing Summer. . . . I feel sad to assure you that John & his Wife don't render a happy nor pleasant home toward Mother & myself. We cannot attain high enjoyment in this place. . . .

In the year 1871 Dr. Howe was appointed a member of the commission sent by President Grant to Santo Domingo, to examine into the condition of the island and its inhabitants. The Dominican government desired annexation to the United States, and Dr. Howe, the Hon. B. F. Wade of Ohio, and President Andrew D. White of Cornell University, were sent to look into the affairs of the beautiful island, which is divided between Santo Domingo and Hayti.

Dr. Howe was so much delighted with the country and the climate of Santo Domingo, and so much interested in the people and their future, that when the scheme of annexation was finally abandoned, he returned in 1872 as the representative of the Samana

Bay Company, an association formed for the purpose of leasing from the Dominican government the peninsula of Samana. Again in 1874 when his health had begun to fail he revisited the island in which he took so deep an interest, and tried for a third time to help the people to the better government and fuller development of their resources, for which the most enlightened among them were so earnestly striving.

The annexation scheme was defeated, largely through Mr. Sumner's strenuous opposition to it. The country at large was not ready for so radical a step. Today the importance of that magnificent harbor, Samana Bay, is recognized by the navy. Another generation may see the national flag raised on that spot, where Dr. and Mrs. Howe stood in 1874, and had the pain of seeing the standard of the Samana Bay Company hauled down.

XVII

1872-1879

REMOVAL TO THE COTTAGES — DEATH OF DR. HOWE — THE MEMORIAL MEETING — THE STATE'S TRIBUTE

IN the year 1870 Dr. Howe was able to carry out the plan he had long contemplated of building a group of cottages and a school-house for the use of the blind girls. The mother house was no longer large enough to accommodate all the pupils, and this was now given over to the exclusive use of the boys. The best feature of the cottage system is the facility it affords the girls to acquire domestic habits and practical experience in household work. Each cottage has its matron, and is in itself a complete family, having more of the elements of home life than was possible at the old building.

In 1872 it was found advisable that Laura should leave the large house, and take her place as a member of one of the cottage families. She bitterly regretted this change, though she realized that she herself was responsible for it, as she had made some trouble at the institution. A letter to Dr. Howe expresses her anxiety to return. She greatly exaggerated her own fault, which was not a serious one. The "New England conscience" was very strong in Laura.

S B March 11th 1872.

My dear Dr Howe, — You are my dear & adopted Father. It is a splendid day. I am visiting Miss Wood a few days. She is so kind to me. I feel so very sad to leave the dear kind friends at the Inst. so soon. Mr A claimed Miss Wood to let me stay with her until it is arranged for me to depart for Hanover. on my account which is extremely sad I felt so sad for a few days last week for having done some things wrong. & to have displeased Miss Moulton so highly. I wept a good deal. I did not mean to commit evil which occurred some time ago. I begged Miss M to forgive me for what I had done wrong I feel sick in mind at times & also very sad. Will you have mercy on your Child Laura. & preserve me in your heart I will resolve to do better & right at the blest Inst. I am so very anxious to return to the Inst. next term to abide with Miss M & others. & give aid to them. I was so happy until a few days ago. It will be a relief for me to receive a letter from you. I will write to you again. My heart aches with grief in having done wrong. will y[ou] forgive me & have mercy on me.

Your aff Child

Laura.

Though at first inconsolable at her change of abode, Laura's natural right-mindedness and cheerful temperament soon reconciled her to her new home. In order that she might enjoy greater variety, it was arranged at the end of the third year that she should divide her time between the four cottages, living for a year in each by turn. As the houses were all alike in design she occupied a corresponding room in each. Her friend

Miss Wood tells of the delight Laura expressed on Dr. Howe's having her room entirely re-furnished. After this, her furniture and carpet were changed at every removal, in order that she might feel more at home. The plan worked so well that the remainder of her life was passed in the pleasant feminine colony on the Fourth Street side of the institution grounds. Here she lived happily and contentedly. She had a light share in the household work, and spoke of herself as "the house assistant." She also helped to teach sewing in the work-room. Here she might be seen of an afternoon overlooking the girls' stitching or running a sewing-machine. To less skilful needle-women, it was marvellous to see the nicety and perfection of her work. She had a high standard of excellence, and often made the girls take out careless bits of sewing. It was well understood that Laura was a far more severe task-mistress than Miss Jenny Dillingham, the seeing teacher. In spite of this she was a great favorite with the scholars; while she was reproving one girl for bad felling, she was threading innumerable needles for the younger and less skilful seamstresses. The teachers and most of the girls were able to talk with her. One of her greatest pleasures was to take tea with Miss Moulton at the old institution. She was often to be found sitting in the parlor of this gentle presiding genius, learning and imparting the news of the day.

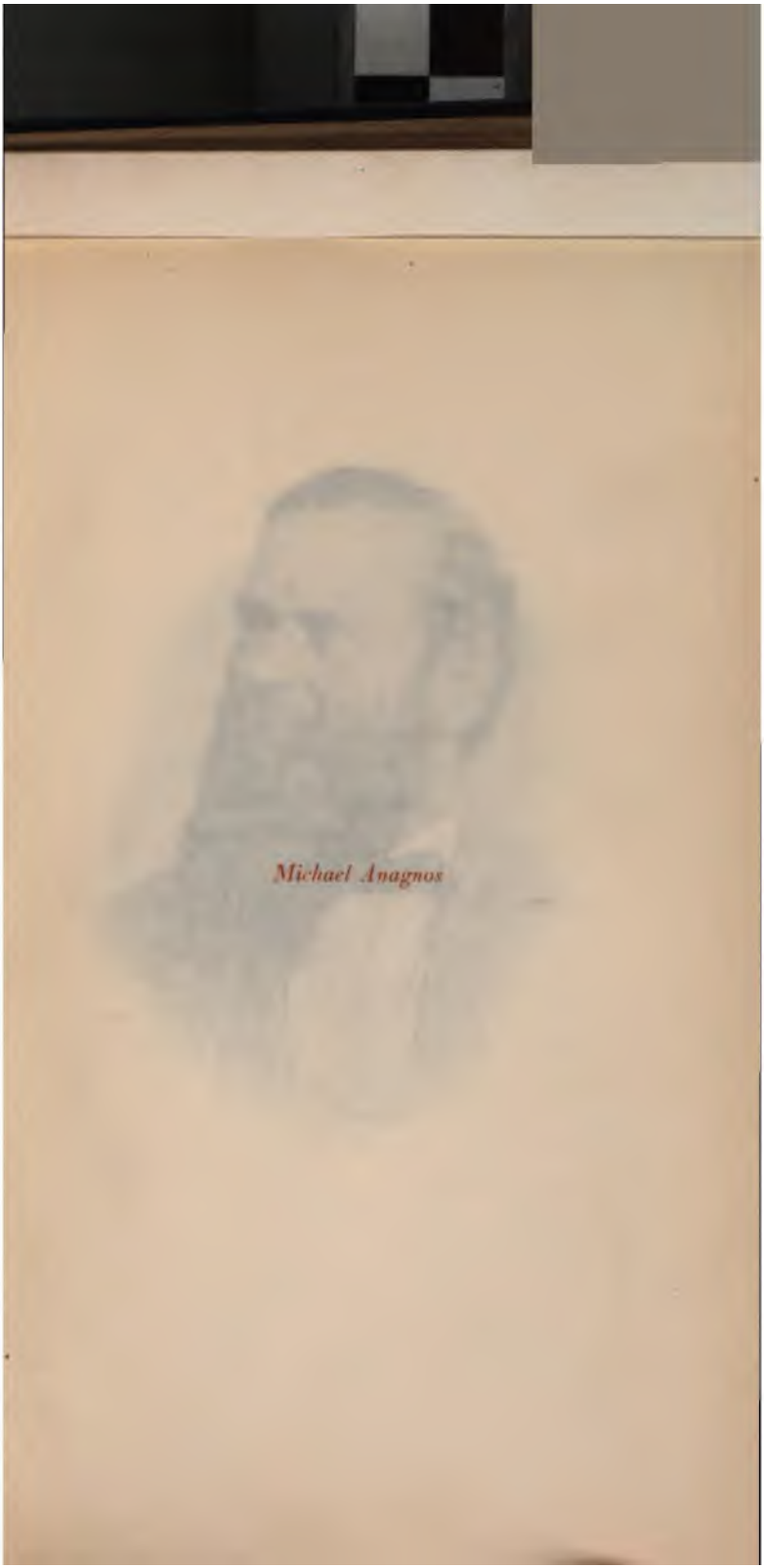
Laura's own room was a cheerful, sunny apartment, filled with her precious knick-knacks and souvenirs; here she kept her library, which included most of the

books which had been printed in raised type, and here she received her intimates.

Her day began early; she was usually downstairs by half-past five, spending the early morning hours in the parlor, reading one of her favorite books. Her taste in literature was good; she enjoyed H. H.'s *Blind Spinner* and Mrs. Ewing's *Story of a Short Life*. In talking to a friend about the latter, she expressed a great interest in poor Sweep, the dog, and sympathized with him because he had no home. The Bible was her most valued book; she never wearied of reading the fourteenth chapter of St. John.

By the time the rest of the family were ready for breakfast, Laura had neatly dusted and set in order the parlor. She was always delighted if she found another early riser. On Sunday morning she walked through the halls at half-past six ringing a sweet-toned bell. At breakfast she rapped a greeting and then laid her hands upon the table to feel the answering rapping. After breakfast she was glad to talk with any of the household who were at liberty, or to sit near Miss Wood, the matron, working at her knitting.

A little later she went to her room, which she always kept as neat as wax. When every inch of drapery and linen was made smooth, every speck of dust removed, each article in its place, she sat down to her writing or her reading. Dinner over there was another friendly lingering together of the ladies, and then she went to her room for a quiet nap. She writes on a day when she was feeling ill and nervous: "The pupils made



Michael Anagnos



such abundance of noises about in the entry and the stairs, it rendered me nervous and uneasy." At half-past three she came down to the parlor, and with the exception of the hour spent in the work-room, was to be found there for the rest of the day, always neatly dressed, always glad to entertain visitors, always cheerful and hospitable.

Of an evening she was ready for a frolic; she never lost her love of fun. The Sunday tea-table was graced by her own porcelain and silver, which she carefully laid out, washed, and put away, never allowing any one else to have the care of it. The most cherished of these precious articles were the silver spoon and fork given her years before by Charles Sumner. As there were not enough spoons to go round they were placed in turn at the plates of the different teachers. Though such an early riser, Laura in her later years did not like to go to bed betimes. One evening she locked her friends into the parlor as a playful hint that they might sit up and keep her company a little longer.

One little trait is significant of the enforced economy of pleasure she always knew. She never paid two visits on the same day. If she went to the institution on Monday to see Miss Moulton, she waited till Wednesday to call upon Miss Lane, the librarian. She greatly enjoyed her visits to Mrs. Anagnos and when Mr. Anagnos, who for many years talked with her only through his wife, finally took her hand and spoke to her with the manual alphabet, she said: "He has made me very happy; he has spoken to me in my own language."

Her knowledge of the character and moods of the people she met has been frequently mentioned, every friend or acquaintance, who has contributed his or her recollections of Laura, has dwelt upon this as one of the interesting things about her. On being introduced to Mr. Henry Richards, who was at that time engaged to her namesake, Laura Howe, she shook hands with him, and immediately said: "He is reserved," which was quite true.

On one occasion a Miss Sinclair, an intellectual woman, and a teacher of high standing, one of whose failings was the writing of verse, was introduced to Laura, and wished to know her opinion of her. Laura, who had never met this lady before, took her hand, dropped it and said: "As cold as a frog," adding, "but her heart is as fire." She then felt of Miss Sinclair's forehead and asked: "Does she write poetry?" The person who told this anecdote asked: "Had Laura struck the poetical vein in the forehead?" It seems more likely that this was another instance of her mind-reading.

As she grew older, Laura learned a little discretion; her keen instincts rarely deceived her, but she found that it is not always well to say the first thing that comes into one's head. A young woman who at one time was engaged as Laura's companion was greatly disliked by her. When Laura was asked what the trouble was she said: "Her hand is not demonstrative." The hand in question was beautifully white, soft, and dimpled, but it had some defect which the eye failed to

notice, and which Laura's fingers immediately found. She always noticed the laugh and the smile of her friends, saying of Miss Mailliard that she had "a beautiful smile." Laura's powers of mimicry are traceable to the minute attention she paid to all the traits and tricks of her acquaintances. It is remembered that she often imitated a person reading aloud, making a cadenced sound sometimes loud, and sometimes low. She knew people's moods by the motions of their fingers and by their footsteps. She retained her interest in current events till the last day of her life, and was always glad to hear what was in the papers. Her memory was as remarkable as her acute sense of touch; yet she was delighted with an anecdote about a little girl who said her "memory was the thing she forgot with."

She remembered the books she read better than most people, and often talked of those that had interested her. History seemed to her very sad and painful: her opinion of kings, derived partly from Dickens' *Child's History of England*, was almost nihilistic, although she was by nature very conservative. She held that kings were a very wicked class of people, and the English kings, she once told a friend, were much akin to strikers, of whom she had a perfect horror.

Her attitude of mind was cordial and responsive. She assumed as a matter of course that people wanted to be kind to her. She had so little knowledge of evil that one of the friends of her later years said of her: "The worst person she ever knew was a girl who

would not learn her lessons." She was very trustful and confiding, — not so much by nature, as through circumstances; she had received so little unkindness in all her days! Once, however, let friend or acquaintance prove himself unworthy of her confidence, and her affection and trust were forfeited forever. To forgive was difficult, to forget impossible! She was a faulty human creature like the rest of us, and it cannot be denied that her wilfulness often caused her and her friends much pain; but in the later years her nature softened and deepened.

Miss Moulton, gentle as an angel, firm and stanch as a Puritan, always exercised a wholesome influence over Laura, who regarded her with a certain awe, mixed with a deep affection. That final test of character, age, Laura stood well. The faces of men and women in their third score of years, are sure indices of their youth and middle age. Laura's face grew sweeter, gentler, happier year by year as her faults grew less and less apparent and her virtues bloomed with increasing robustness. This mellowing of her character was noticed by all her friends. It was well said of her: "Few human lives have ever been open to the scrutiny that she was always subject to, and how few could stand it as well as she!" She always kept her neat, slender, erect figure, though at one time she was haunted by the nightmare of growing fat, which embitters so many lives. In this, as well as in her dislike of growing old, she was quite like other people. One day while talking with Miss Moulton, Laura passed her hand over

her friend's face, feeling the lines that time had chiselled on that calm beautiful brow. "Do you not feel badly to be growing so old?" she asked. She once said, when asked to write her name, "I am tired of writing old Laura Bridgman."

She highly approved of matrimony, and for a long time held tenaciously to the idea that she would marry. She spoke of this once to Mrs. Mailliard, who said: "You have the doctor, and you have your teacher; you do not need any one else." "The doctor is much older than I, he will die; my teacher will marry, and I shall be left alone," was Laura's answer.

Though she was very fond of dress, it was often necessary for her friends to urge her to spend her money upon it, as she had the instinct of saving strongly developed. She once said *à propos* of a new dress: "A kind face is better than rich clothes."

She lived largely in her imagination at this time as in her youth, and was often seen talking to herself, spelling the words with one hand in the palm of the other. She disliked to be alone, and was quite content to sit quiet, so long as she was near some friendly person. She was often heard to utter the sounds or names of the people she loved and with whom her thoughts were busy, while her swift needle wove its delicate lace tracery. She could say *doctor*, and *grandma*, *Tom*, *Peter* and a few other names, but for the most part she made the sounds by which she called her friends.

One of her pleasant tasks was choosing the hymn and the extracts from the Bible for the morning services.

She was always present at prayers, following the words of the hymns and the scriptures in her raised books. She occasionally went to her church to take the communion.

The record of her quiet life at the cottages is best told in her letters. Her correspondence with Mr. Morrison Heady is very interesting; he seems to have touched the imaginative side of her nature more strongly than any one else; her letters to him are full of quaint images.

(*To Mr. Heady.*)

S B Jan 19th '73

My very dear Brother, — How is your health recently. I had a delightful view of a long letter from you enclosed a Poem. copied just a few days ere the anniversary of my birthday I read the letter twice the same time of receiving it. I have wished for a long time to reply & to thank you truly for the Poem & a most acceptable letter. But my health had failed until I was ill in bed for nearly a week this new year. which was such a gift of a very hoarse cold & chills & pains, which I suffered exceedingly with a head ache & Catarrh. My brow & eyes were so tender & achy. I went to visit at the old Inst Christmas. I felt almost sick & also I went to a happy party the new year-even where it was appointed at the girls new school-house. Some of the boys were permitted to go to the same house. Miss M & Mrs Dr Howe & many more folks were presented. There were Dialogues & singing. then we had refreshment consisting ice-cream & nice cake. These goodies were so gratifying to my palate. But hurtful as I was not well at all. Miss Freda Black by whom I was sitting

suggested me not to eat more. as I asked for more ice-cream ere being warned of eating more ice. She is my dear blind & adopted Sister whom I love as well as an own. I am better but far from well. Let me give you a description of my cheerful home. My new room is wholly furnished, excepting a table & a sink. on account of not plenty of room. I have got a nice figure carpet red & drab white. An immense wardrobe & a new spring bedstead. the head of the bed is ornamental. Not as wide as common. A new walnut bureau with a marble top. a small ottoma[n] like a box, & my gifted rockers years old. I have many little articles for ornament. I hope to have a very small bracket on purpose. How should my dear Morrison like to do a favor of making a pretty bracket combined with two or 3 little shelves. & it will look pretty above my bureau. I shall thank you ever so much for the job of your trying to make one. Can you obtain a kind person to assist you. & Send it by mail or express in a safe box or some kind for a treasure. Write to me again. I visited Miss M last Tuesday. My room is adjoined Miss Black's. The ray of sun smiles in mine ere 9 o'clock & vanish away ere 4 in the P. M. I wish you & your Mother a happy new year. I am tired out. Good night.

Your aff Sister

LAURA.

(*To Mrs. Bond.*)

S B Mar 15 74

MY DEAR WIGHT, — How are you this evening. I have had a tranquil day writing to Nell & Mother & reviewing Psalms & contemplating a subject of religion & had a delightful call from Lydia in my cheer. home. I invited Miss Black to join us also I found L awaiting

me in my room in a few minutes as I had some nice troy pudding steamed with rich sauce. L gave me some crisp ginger cakes that Mrs. Palmer sent me. I set a plate with the gingerbread on t table for tea which you brought me Miss W & Miss B liked it much. It was not so short as the one Minnie makes for us. Miss W. said it was very nice. Dr. H. had gone to San Domingo with his Wife & Maud a few days since. It may improve his ill health. greatly. He will return back in May or June. I was at old Inst visiting my old blind friend & guest t other day when Dr came here & bade the folk Adieu. I hoped having seen him in time at the Inst. but in vain. A blind gent came for me to go there & then he conducted me back. . . .

I remain ever your ture [true] friend

L.

When Charles Dickens was in the United States in 1868, Dr. Howe wrote asking him to place one of his works within the reach of the blind, by giving to them an edition in raised print. Mr. Dickens agreed to this request, and chose for that purpose *The Old Curiosity Shop,* which Laura read more than once with the keenest delight.

On one occasion an English alienist came to see Laura, and, learning that she was interested in reading, he asked her several questions upon that subject. In response Laura told him that she greatly enjoyed books, especially *The Old Curiosity Shop,* which she was then reading. She expressed her fondness for the character of Little Nell, "but," she added, "I have no respect for Quilp." She remembered Mr. Dickens' visit to the

institution in 1842, and always spoke of it to her English friends.

The summer of 1875 was a distressful one to Laura, as it was to all who were near enough to Dr. Howe to realize that it was the last summer he could ever see. For some time his health had been much broken, but now it began to fail rapidly. The family moved to their country home in South Portsmouth, Rhode Island, earlier than usual, and here the intrepid soldier's last earthly battle began. Though he knew he would never see his beloved trees blossom again, he used his failing strength to prune the vines and fruit trees that his children and grand-children might gather the fruit. Indoors, in spite of weakness and pain unspeakable, he labored early and late on his last Report.

In October he returned to Green Peace, to be near his eldest daughter Julia Romana, who, with her husband Michael Anagnos, was devoting herself to the affairs of the institution. With the aid of these two young people the doctor was able to the last to attend to the administration of the school. On the 4th of January he was stricken down just as he was preparing to start for his daily expedition to the institution. He never recovered consciousness, dying five days later on the 9th of January, 1876. A day or two before the end Laura was summoned to take leave of her best friend. Mrs. Howe thus describes the parting: —

"The pathos of Laura's last meeting with her great benefactor was almost beyond description. The man

who, at much cost of heroic effort, had delivered to her the keys of life, lay helpless in the grasp of fatal disease, his closing hour drawing nigh. He was surrounded by those nearest to him in ties of affection and kindred, but in all this sorrow, it was felt that a place belonged to this spiritual child, this creature, who, from childhood to mature womanhood, had been guided by his counsel and shielded by his love, owing him in the first instance the revelation of her own humanity. She could not see — she never had seen him, but she knew that she was in his presence for the last time. She was allowed to touch his features very softly, and a little agonized sound, scarcely audible, alone broke the silence of the solemn scene. All who were present deeply felt the significance of this farewell."

The day after Dr. Howe's death, His Excellency Alexander H. Rice, Governor of Massachusetts, sent the following special message to the legislature then in session: —

"I have the mournful duty of communicating to the General Court tidings of the death of a distinguished citizen of Massachusetts, Dr. Samuel G. Howe of Boston, for nearly half a century connected most prominently with the charitable and educational institutions of the Commonwealth.

"The services rendered by Dr. Howe to Massachusetts, to the United States, and to the whole world, by his early, energetic, and long-continued labors to educate the blind and deaf, to reform the discipline of prisons, to instruct the idiotic, and to ameliorate the condition of the insane, and of the unfortunate of all classes, merit the recognition which they have received in years past,

and call for some public tribute to his memory, now that his long and noble career of philanthropy has closed.

"At the time of his death he was still at the head of the Massachusetts Institution for the Blind, of which he was the founder, and for more than forty years the director. I am informed that his funeral rites will be performed there, in presence of the pupils whom his skill has instructed, and of whom, at his suggestion, this Commonwealth has long been the beneficent patron.

"I leave to the wisdom of the General Court the adoption of such measures as may testify the sorrow which the people of Massachusetts feel at the death of a Philanthropist so illustrious, and a public servant so faithful in his high vocation."

The funeral services were attended by many members of the legislature, and a committee of the two Houses was appointed to report resolutions in honor of Dr. Howe. During the following week the committee reported the resolutions printed below, which were passed at first by the Senate, after eulogies by Hon. George B. Loring, President of the Senate, and others, — and then by the House of Representatives, after eulogies by Hon. E. H. Kellogg of Pittsfield, and others.

Resolved, That the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, ever mindful of the welfare of the poor and the claims of the unfortunate among its people, recalls with gratitude the constant and efficacious service devoted by the late Dr. Samuel G. Howe to the education of the blind, the deaf, and the feeble-minded children of this Commonwealth, to the improvement of the discipline of prisons and reform schools, to the better care of the insane, the prevention of pauperism, and, in general, to the public

charities of Massachusetts, with which he has been for a whole generation officially connected.

Resolved, That especial mention ought to be made of that grand achievement of science and patient beneficence, the education by Dr. Howe of deaf, dumb, and blind children in such a manner as to restore them to that communication with their friends and with the world which others enjoy, but from which they seemed wholly debarred until his genius and benevolence found for them the key of language, accustomed it to their hands, and thus gave them freedom instead of bondage, and light for darkness.

Resolved, That the people of Massachusetts, always desirous of liberty for themselves and for others, proudly cherish the recollection of that gallant spirit which led Dr. Howe, in youth, in mature manhood, and in advancing age, to rank himself, with many or with few, among the champions of oppressed races and emancipated nationalities, emulating in this the deeds of his countrymen in the American revolution, and the noble career of his friend and the friend of mankind, — the illustrious Lafayette.

Resolved, That we tender our sympathy to the family of the deceased, and that a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to them.

The death of one of the last of that band of Titans, which New England gave to the world in the opening years of the last century, moved the commonwealth of Massachusetts profoundly. The eulogies pronounced in the senate and the house of representatives but roused a desire in the public to hear more of this many-sided man, of whom Mr. Kellogg said in the legislature: "We rarely mourn a man who served a constituency as wide as the world." A public memorial

service was called for and was held at the Music Hall on the 8th of February. The Governor presided on this memorable occasion and the hall was crowded. The spirit which characterized the meeting transcended regret. It was the celebration of a victory, rather than the mourning for a loss. As friend after friend, statesman, poet, preacher, philosopher, soldier arose, and one after another testified to the work Dr. Howe had done, the people realized that they had met together to commemorate the passing of a man of genius. Not the least eloquent of those who bore witness that day was the pale, silent woman, whose expressive face, wan with weeping, was familiar to many of the company. Laura Bridgman brought her ransomed spirit as a tribute to the memory of her best friend.

We find few letters written by Laura at this period. She pined and faded under her grief till those who were near her believed that she would soon follow her "noble Doctor." She grew pale at any allusion to him, and pressing her hands to her heart gave utterance to those melancholy ejaculations, which sounded like the outcry of a wounded bird.

She says in a letter written some time after to her mother: —

"I still miss the noble Dr. H so sadly. & cry at his loss occasionally. Mr. Anagnos greets me very friendly. Miss Percy is printing books of life of Dr. Howe. I was ill with a hard cold & pain on Christmas. I feel poorly by turns. & so ambitious & busy beyond my physical strength. I am dizzy some times."

Her own father had disinherited Laura, but Dr. Howe made a provision in his will by which an income was secured to Laura that, with the money already held in trust for her, made her independent. A home at her beloved institution was thus insured to her for the rest of her life.

Though for months Dr. Howe's strength had been as that of a little child, when he was gone his family, his scholars, the little miniature world where for so long he had reigned a benign and powerful ruler, paused, wondered if it was possible that all should go on as before, when the hand which had planned and guided all things was nerveless and still. One of the children in the school for idiots on hearing of his death said: "They say Dr. Howe will take care of the blind in Heaven, won't he take care of us too?"

The great hopeless blank seemed too much at first for his daughter Julia, his first-born, the star child, the nearest to his great heart of all his children. She, like Laura, pined and for months stood at the gate of the valley of the shadow of death. Then she took courage, she put her hand to his work, which for ten years she was spared to carry on, at the side of her husband, who had been a son in love and loyalty to her adored father.

Mr. Anagnos, who had long been the assistant director, succeeded Dr. Howe as director of the school, a post which he has ably filled till this day.

XVIII

FIFTIETH JUBILEE — LAST DAYS

FOR so practical a people, Americans are governed by sentiment to an extraordinary degree. The last quarter of the nineteenth century will be remembered as the time when the United States took account of stock, reckoned over her heroes, her men of genius, her victories, and her triumphs. Beginning with 1876, the hundredth birthday, and ending with 1892, the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, there is a long line of celebrations, centennials, bicentennials, semi-centennials, jubilees, and festivals, in honor of certain men and certain events which Columbia cannot forget. She stands a free and débonnaire virgin turning the search-light of history back upon the dim dead centuries. Now one day, now another shines for a moment in that penetrating radiance, and the strenuous citizen of today stops his work and looks back, throws up his cap and gives a cheer for the lion heart of Columbus, a prayer for the repose of Washington, a groan for the martyrdom of Brown, a tear for the sacrifice of Lincoln.

The states follow their leader, Massachusetts pours out a libation to John Harvard, dead in the flesh two

hundred and fifty years, but living in the seed he planted on the banks of the Charles. Cities, towns, villages, follow suit. Clubs, churches, corporations, public institutions of every class celebrate their anniversaries. Over the seas the queen of England and the Pope of Rome celebrate their jubilees, and little Laura Bridgman, whose mother had longed that she might be spared the agony of a life without light of mind or of body, has her jubilee.

Those who have followed Laura through the darkened days of early childhood, the brilliant years of youth, and finally through the sun-and-shade-flecked period of middle age, will realize that the jubilee celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of her arrival at the institution came like a day of glorious Indian summer into the sober autumn of her life.

It was decided that her jubilee should be held on her fifty-eighth birthday, the 21st of December, 1887. The hall in the old institution was hung with flowers; over the organ was written in roses Dr. Howe's saying, "Obstacles Are Things to be Overcome." At four in the afternoon the company began to assemble; old and new friends hurried to Laura's side, took her hand, and told her of their sympathy and affection. The guests were of every age and all conditions. A group of tiny children from the kindergarten for the blind hailed in song the "Birthday Queen," laying at her feet an offering of the flowers she loved best. Laura had lived to see the first fruits of the new school she had helped to found, and in whose future she took a keen interest.

The pleasant task of presiding over the festival was allotted to Mrs. Howe, who struck the key-note of the occasion with her first words: "We meet today at once to congratulate a friend, and to celebrate an achievement."

In Laura's address of welcome to the company, read aloud by Mrs. Howe, she said: —

"There was a little blind and deaf and dumb girl named Laura D. Bridgman, whose eye was shaded by a curtain from her childhood; then the curtain was drawn up by the hand of God, and her head was filled with light divine. She lived on an immense farm in Hanover, N. H. She was conducted to Boston by her parents at the age of seven years. A great and wise gentleman came to visit her at her own home. His name was Dr. S. G. Howe, of whom little Laura was so very shy; she was timid of his long hands when he took her tiny hands gently and kindly. Little Laura was shy when Charles Sumner and Dr. John Fisher and other gentlemen greeted her most cordially and kindly. She was so happy to live with Dr. Howe and his sister Jeannette for months.

"It was a joyous privilege for her to learn to spell on her tiny fingers. She learned to thread a darning needle by the aid of the first matron of the institution, whose name was Mrs. Smith. She loved her dearly. She used to rock on a rocking horse; she used to ride in a basket with wheels, the girls loved to draw her so much. She studied arithmetic, algebra, geography, history, astronomy, philosophy, and geometry when she was grown up. It was a blessing that she could accomplish various things. Besides doing duties for the matron and friends, she was happy to be the assistant of the teacher in the work

school for many long terms. She hopes zealously that all children will be cared for with a loving providence from our heavenly Father; also that they may love him.

"It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all on the blest anniversary of my birthday. I praise the Lord for his loving kindness toward me. He has been merciful to enrich me with a home and many friends during this long, long life of fifty years. I have attained the enjoyment through the wondrous goodness of our heavenly Father. If Dr. Howe and Mrs. Morton and Miss Rogers and Mrs. Bond were on the wide earth, it would add the happiness of my greeting them at this jubilee. But the Lord is my joy, and I rely on him for real happiness. I loved Dr. Howe as well as an own father. He was a precious gift from above for my youth. He is more worthy than fine gold."

Laura's story was told again that afternoon by one and another brilliant speaker, its lesson commented upon, its triumphs rehearsed. The story is now so familiar, that we must not linger too long in the old hall which has been the scene of so many tender, so many heart-breaking meetings and partings, but there is one who spoke that day whose voice is now silent, though his words live with the glory of undying truth. Phillips Brooks said in speaking of Laura's condition: —

"How isolated, shrouded in darkness, it seems to us, yet perhaps more blessed than we can imagine, since in her blindness she may have seen things that other minds have never conceived. There is something more than the mere fifty years of Laura Bridgman's life that we can

be grateful for. It has opened up a new thought, a new world to us, — the knowledge of that great unseen. I do not know how much she has realized this, how much light she has shed upon science and upon the method of treating those similarly afflicted; but it is certainly great. Her life has been free from distractions; it has not been pulled about by outside influence. In the silent house of fifty years this life must have been drawn near to God with a nearness which we cannot feel. If she has had thought of the great usefulness of her life, of its inspiration, we have nothing to pity her for, only to congratulate her, and feel a fellow-thankfulness for her life."

Miss Moulton, sitting by Laura's side, interpreted the words of the speakers, and her mobile, expressive face was never more interesting than on that afternoon when smile and shadow flitted across her delicate features as she followed the words of affection and cheer from her many friends.

Heretofore Laura's idea of a birthday celebration had been that she should receive letters and gifts and a few visits from her most intimate friends. She was quite unprepared for the wide interest felt in her jubilee. That it should be celebrated by all the inmates of the institution, that she should count among her guests some of the greatest and wisest people of her time, that the anniversary should be observed with more pomp and circumstance than any festival she had ever known — moved her profoundly.

A Christmas tree laden with gifts was placed in the middle of the platform. When Laura was led up to

the tree, the existence of which she had never suspected, her surprise and delight were something touching and beautiful. She fluttered about the branches like a sober brown butterfly, touching one and another of her pretty things, and uttering her expressive cries of joy. A gold bracelet, an ornament she had long wished to possess, was quickly discovered and clasped upon her wrist. Perhaps the superlative moment for her was that in which she touched and recognized a large music-box. On being consulted about the celebration of her birthday, Laura had made, as her only suggestion, the following remark: "I would not like to dictate, but a music-box would make me very happy." As she felt the long coveted treasure, it was noticed that she trembled violently. She very rarely wept, the few times in her life when she shed tears are chronicled by her friends as noteworthy occasions. In her later years, these fine, nervous tremors seemed to give Laura's surcharged emotions the same relief that other women find in tears. She rapidly and skilfully set the music-box in motion and laughed aloud with joy as she felt its vibration.

It was many days before the excitement wore off, and the fears which her friends had entertained for her health were dispelled. The memory of her jubilee brightened the last years of her life. She never ceased to speak of it with pride and emotion.

She says when writing to her mother: "I write many letters partly in acknowledgment of gifts and partly in answers. You see I am so highly honored with kind

remembrances from friends and strangers according to my anniversary reception."

It was often found best to warn Laura of the approaching death of a friend in order that she might be spared the shock of surprise which makes bereavement doubly terrible. Some one evidently told her of her uncle Joseph's failing health, whereupon the loving and artless creature writes the poor old fellow this naïve letter: —

So Boston March 11 1888

My dear Uncle Joseph, — I am most happy to have the pleasure of writing you a letter as a farewell. You may not live another year because you have far advanced toward holy home which is in the glorious world of a king above. Your Sister Harmony is so well all the long Winter. She was in Lebanon a while ago visiting Ellen & Lina. she felt so happy away from home. They write often to me about her. for it is too much task to her head & eyes in writing cards. I shall see her in June with delight. Have you heard much of my last birth. such grand Jubilee & a joyous reception. No time for greeting all guests but few. It was a snowy day. I have lived in Boston 50 years through the holy spirit. . . .

Your ever loving Niece

Laura.

She writes to her mother of the latter's failing health in the same frank manner, though we know that one of Laura's most earnest prayers was that she might not survive Harmony Bridgman.

So Boston April 15 1888

My very dear Mother, — I had a long letter from Lina more than 1 week ago. she told me about you & old Mrs Simmions. I pity her so greatly for she is poorly. She may not live many years. nor you also. I know how blissful & beautiful the city of God will be for you to live forever with our Saviour & many Angels. I write coarsely for you to read with ease as your poor eyes are much weaker than last year. I am spending this Sabbath with Miss Bennett & feel so homelike too. I shall be so happy to live with her & her sister Mrs Knowlton next fall. I love them dearly. I feel poorly & so weary beyond my strength. but am so ambitious which drives me along on working. I am knitting some edging of 90 thread for a hdkf for Lula's birth gift the only Child of Mrs. Knowlton. . . . I shall be glad to be with you next Summer we will have good time. Do not over wor[k]. . . .

Your loving Child

Laura.

Write to me if you can.

The last summer of Laura's life was spent at Hanover. When the vacation was over her thoughts and wishes carried her back to South Boston. In her letters to Miss Moulton she follows every event likely to be happening at the institution, and we cannot fail to see that she is impatient to take her place in her "sunny home."

Etna. N. H. Sept 9th. 88

My blessed friend and Sister, — It is a balmy day. No doubt of your arrival at the immense Inst a few days ago. in preparatory to the household. for reception of

the returning people. I should love dearly to fly and greet you and chat an hour too. I know how much of essential busy you have to be attended to. so I will excuse you for not writing to me until at your leisure and feel able to do that. Mother wishes me to thank you kindly for your note dated in Aug. She feels nicely since she went to the sanctuary and joined the Lord's holy feast at his table this p. m. Sadly was I myself to be unable to accompany my Mother to church for the last. but I felt almost ill with my old aching eye Friday night and so languid yesterday and had 2 reposes on my bed. and am better to-night. Mother felt unable to guide me to church her nerves are very weak. she sends her best love to you.

Your loving Sister

L. D. Bridgman.

The winter of 1888–9 found Laura established in South Boston. She was still busy, though there were moments of enforced idleness which she bore bravely. Her friends noticed that she seemed more dependent on their society than formerly.

The letters written during the last winter of Laura's life have an especial interest. We have selected for publication those that give the best picture of her life at the dove cote. Miss A. Bond was the daughter of her beloved Wight.

So Boston Nov 25th. 1888

My dear Miss A Bond, — It is a nice chance to send a letter to you by Mr. Allen whom I saw last Friday at the old Inst. I was visiting a teacher Miss Boylan for that day long. Mr. A. made the alphabet with his fingers and I showed him how to make them. I hope to receive

a long call from you and also your Sister Mary on my birthday. How much I should like to chat with you both but it may not be so for both of you to have an opportun[i]ty of coming to see me. I wish to be kindly remembered to Martha and Ellen and your dear papa. I wonder utterly that they do not come to see me. I enquired for you all through Mr. Allen and Miss Langley last Friday. Miss L. teaches some boys music she talked to me with her lovely fingers. I like to meet charming people I could not help loving her so quickly. I call in Miss Moulton's sitting room often. She is 70 years old 18th of last Aug. She looks young and bright. She is my adopted Sister. I am going to visit her on my birthday if nothing prevents. I am not feeling well recently. I came to Boston 5th Nov. my Sister Ellen came with me and she went home this week she visited some friends and came to see me twice. She is much better since her absence from home. Will you please to bring the picture of your Mother to me. I wish to have my Mother gaze it she spoke of it long ago. Her mind is much failed. her head and eyes are so poor.

I am ever yours truly

L D Bridgman.

So. Boston Feb 10. 89

My very dear Mother, — Mrs. Knowlton is going to church now this Evening with Miss Wood. I received your card long ago was happy to think of the spirit of strength of the Lord for the pleasure of going to call on the kind Neighbors this mild Winter. I received a pricked letter from Miss Bertha Smith yesterday. She said that she saw you occasionally and there is sleighing. We do not have snow only so little. which seems like Autumn more than for many long years. but it has been

bitterly cold this week. until yesterday and today. I have felt poorly and weakly a great part of this winter. but very busy. I was ill some times. My throat was thorny and sore for 2 weeks 2. I took few tablets for my cold and the throat. I have had some orders for knitting lace from strangers. am still knitting and reading and doing many things beyond strength. Some days had to rest on my bed for hours. It was the anniversary of Mrs. Knowlton's birth 1 week ago and Mrs. Hopkins last tuesday. I celebrated their birthdays I visited Mrs. Hopkins and had ice cream flavored with banana and vanilla several kinds of cake. she had lovely flowers roses &c. & fruit. I get tired quickly. My love to Carrie, and be sure to write to me.

Your loving LAURA.

[*To her Sister*].

So BOSTON April 14. 89.

MY VERY DEAR SISTER HONEY, — I am happy to feel able to reply [to] your 2 letters which came duly to me last month. 1 week last Saturday I felt ill and my face and nose were sore and looked red. Mrs. Knowlton went to see Dr. Belt on the broad way that day. Evening he came to see me in my bed, and staid a half of 1 hour. he put a tiny tube in my mouth. I was feverish a few days. It was Eryspepsia [erysipelas] very light and my nose was anointed with vaslise [vaseline] several times. the Dr. ordered some medicine for me to take. he is an assistant of Dr. Homans I was in bed 2 days without a dress. I am much better and so grateful praising the Lord for his grace and mercy during my illness. I will write you a greeting birth letter if able I should be so glad to stop with you when arriving to Lebanon as I did last June. You must not overdo but keep as comfortable

as possible. I shall be so sadly lonely at my home on account of 1 of my best friends who will never welcome me again. She and I had such lovely times for many Summers & Falls. . . .

Your loving Sister LAURA.

We know that Laura was not so strong as usual during this last winter, though there is less testimony in her own handwriting of her feeble health than heretofore. "I am happy and so busy!" The great boon of continued usefulness Laura enjoyed. Until she took to her bed never to leave it, she was able to work, to read, to write, to visit and receive visits from her friends, to perform the duties and enjoy the pleasures which made up the sum of her daily life. She sometimes spoke of her "thorny throat" and her restlessness at night: "My poor bones have fever." She was observed to press the palms of her hands upon the top of her head, complaining meanwhile of dizziness. Her friends had, however, no anxiety about her until April, when a slight attack of erysipelas kept her in her room four days. A fortnight later the disease reappeared in the same mild form; gradually more serious symptoms developed, and it was whispered that Laura Bridgman lay nigh unto death. While she was still strong enough to talk with her friends, she received a visit from Mrs. Howe. "Should you like some strawberries?" asked her old friend. "Very much," said Laura, and pressed her guest's hand to emphasize the words.

The brief story of her last days is given in the words of the faithful friend, Mrs. M. A. Knowlton, for whom

Laura had performed so many kindly offices during the last winter of her life: —

"The first night that she seemed too ill to be left alone she did not appear to realize that my being with her so late was unusual. When I bade her good-night and told her another friend had come to care for her she smiled gratefully, but said nothing. Her face was exceedingly expressive throughout the illness, but she spoke very little. One day she wished me to write to a very dear friend, whom she always called orally 'P. M.' 'Tell P. M. that Miss Dewey is very ill,' was her request.

"The friend came immediately bringing what for years had been known between the two as the 'peaceful book.' Years before, when Laura had been very much annoyed, this friend, Miss Mary C. Moore, read selections from the *Imitation of Christ*. Laura's feelings were soothed and the book became the peaceful book. Laura was always glad to see it, and would fondly kiss it whenever she found it on the table. 'The peaceful book' was now always near her and I occasionally read a bit to her. A smile was the unvarying response. Her illness was brief and she was too sick to say much from the first. A patient quietness told us how very ill she was. In her usual health she told us all very particularly whenever she had a small pain, but when she was truly ill she answered most sweetly to inquiries for her feelings, 'I think I am better,' and her greeting to the doctor often was: 'Tell him I am all right.'

"She was not at all inclined to talk during this time, but we who were with her felt the loving sufferer's patience and cheer, though there may be but little to show this in a record of events.

"She held all physicians in great esteem, and was especially attached to the institution physician; but he was unable to attend her during her last illness, and when, two days before she died, he came to her she brightened and smiled as she had not done during her illness, and asked immediately: 'What does Dr. Homans say?'

"Sunday and Thursday afternoons were the times when I could be with her for several consecutive hours, and she held my hand very tightly on those days when I greeted her, showing very clearly that she had counted on my remaining with her.

"She had little services, which she reserved for different members of the family. When I came to bid her good-morning she always wanted her head bathed and her hair combed, and for the first few days never failed to inquire if I had returned the brush and comb to the proper box, to the proper corner of the proper drawer. The last Sunday she wished me to see if the things in the lower bureau drawer had been removed, and to take some things from the wardrobe and pack away from the moths. I persuaded her to wait until she was stronger, and I am sure that she realized her weakness then, for she yielded without protest.

"Thursday at midnight the sister who was with her was for a while deceived by her renewed strength and

brightness. Laura had been lying prostrate for several hours with scarcely strength to swallow. Then she asked for wine and milk and wished to sit up. The sister raised her in bed and Laura drank a little, but in about fifteen minutes the sister saw the meaning of the sudden strength. At daybreak she called the other sister and summoned the doctor. I do not think Laura knew me again though she wanted to hold tightly to some one's hand. About nine o'clock on Friday morning she tried to make some letters, but her poor hand was already stiffening. After two efforts Mrs. Smith guessed the word from the four letters which Laura had succeeded in making, and very slowly spelled into Laura's hand m-o-t-h-e-r. She nodded twice and her lips relaxed a little. It was the last effort which she made toward any communication. She simply ceased breathing a few minutes before twelve o'clock on Friday, May 24th."

The funeral service, held in the hall of the old institution, was the last scene in the drama. It brought together many of those who had met there to greet Laura on her jubilee, two years before. She lay surrounded by spring flowers; a bust of Dr. Howe stood at the head of the white coffin; a laurel garland from the bier fell across the pedestal. In front of the organ, which was hung with ivy, sat the blind choristers; when the deep notes, whose thrill had always moved Laura, rolled from the organ-pipes, the choir rose to sing the hymn of parting. Near the coffin sat three of Laura's kinswomen, two of her sisters and a cousin. Harmony

Bridgman, too old and feeble to make the journey to Boston, sat at home in Hanover waiting till they should bring back the body of the child she had outlived.

Laura's friends, and the members of the household, completely filled the hall, so that there were few strangers present. To some among the company there were unseen guests, shadows of memory. The shining faces of the singing children gave way to other childish faces, — Lucy Reed, Oliver, Abby Carter the first pupil, Uncle Asa the first friend, Wight the beloved teacher. The white face among the flowers faded, and in its place lay a fairer face, the face of Julia Romana.

After the singing came the prayer, reading from the Bible, and a rehearsal of the story of Laura and her deliverer, and the good fight they both fought.

The Rev. D. B. Jutten, of the South Baptist Church of South Boston, read portions of Scripture and made a brief address, in the course of which he said : —

" Silent need is a cry in the ear of God. He had designed that a noble and gifted and hopeful spirit should come in contact with this pitiful and sorrowful soul. In man's extremity succor comes from heaven, and when relatives despaired a brave, courageous man took this hopeless case into his care. He was like one of those knights errant of the middle ages, possessed of all their chivalry, setting himself down before some castle whose triply-barred gate refused him entrance, and then laying siege until the gate was forced and the imprisoned captive released. Such deeds as that go down into history, for they are not simply the history of the woman's life — they

are part of the history of the life of her great benefactor, part of the history of this beneficent institution."

Dr. Edward Everett Hale then spoke; he said in part: —

"We cannot help realizing that, owing to the life of this woman, there has been a step taken forward and upward in the education of children in all civilized lands. God has so ordered it, in his providence and wisdom, that in the marvellous development of her life a step was taken which has changed all education, in what it was, what it is and what it promises to be. And that is the feeling which the world will have, as from nation to nation it comes to know that Laura Bridgman has passed from life to life — that she sees as she is seen and knows as she is known. People may say what they choose of sentiment, of hope and love, being mere products of matter, mere results of our senses. Here we are met by this extraordinary truth, that this woman, in whom faith and hope and love were so strong that they could work almost miracles, had but one or two of the senses which are said to be necessary to such manifestations of sentiment. Now that is a great and living truth which a listening world is not going to lose. I should also like to say in the hearing of my younger friends that we have here encouragement for the life of even the youngest and weakest. . . .

"We should, therefore, go away from this place with the sense that it is our duty to live more in the knowledge of God's mercies and of what we owe to others. Out of Laura Bridgman have come the gladness of her life and the benefit and blessing of that world of children to be educated under the new methods. Let us bear in mind that we are not the creatures of the senses, that we do

not depend on the things that perish, that we can live here with God, for God's children, in God's heaven, and as we live so we enter into the very joy of our Lord."

In Hanover where she was born, not far from the stream in which she was baptized, Laura was buried, in a quiet corner of God's acre.

Since the success of Dr. Howe's great experiment, many blind deaf-mutes have been benefited by the system of education, which he devised for Laura and which is used today, in substantially the same form, in cases of similarly afflicted children and youth, both in America and in Europe. Of these cases, the most interesting and most widely known is Helen Keller, a gifted, charming, and brilliant young woman now (1903) a student at Radcliffe College.

Helen Keller's early education was conducted on the same lines as Laura's. At the request of her parents, the authorities of the Perkins Institution sent one of its graduates, Miss Anna M. Sullivan, to instruct the little girl at her home in Tuscumbia, Alabama.

Before starting on her mission, Miss Sullivan studied Dr. Howe's Reports, and familiarized herself with his methods. Moreover, from 1888 to 1893, Helen spent the greater part of her time at the girls' department of the Perkins Institution for the Blind in South Boston, associating with the pupils and with Laura Bridgman, using the books and appliances of the school and receiving constantly information from its teachers. The exact and minute daily record, which is of such value

in Laura's case, is unfortunately wanting in Helen's. It is deeply to be regretted that, owing to the lack of reliable scientific data, it has proved inexpedient to give a fuller account of this interesting case.

We are indebted to Mr. M. A. de Wolf Howe for the following description of the centennial celebration of the birth of Dr. Howe: —

"It is the good fortune of a few of those who enrich human life to leave behind them some permanent memorial — a book, a picture, a building. To a still smaller number comes the felicity of leaving their work embodied in living persons, whose daily lives are the fruit of that work. The name of Lincoln can never be separated from that of a race set free. The name of Samuel Gridley Howe stands also for a great emancipation. Those who have been freed from the bondage of the blind, of the speechless and the deaf are the living memorials of his life, the embodiment of his watchword: 'Obstacles are things to be overcome.'

"It was a happy thought which prompted the graduates of the Perkins Institution and Massachusetts School for the Blind to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of his birth by public ceremonies. These were held in Tremont Temple, Boston, on Monday, November 11, 1901, a day later than the actual centenary. Memorable words were spoken by men and women who had faced life on the equal terms belonging to all possessors of the common gifts of mankind. These speakers were Senator Hoar, who presided over the meeting; Dr. Edward Everett Hale, bringing 'Personal Reminiscences;' Mr. Richard C. Humphreys, telling of the 'Establishment of the School for Feeble-Minded Children;' Mr. Frank B. Sanborn, on 'Dr. Howe as Chairman of the State Board

of Charities;' and Prof. J. Irving Manatt, representing Brown University and treating his subject as an alumnus of that college and 'Champion of Greek Independence.' In conclusion Mrs. Howe herself touched the inmost spirits of all who heard her say: 'I thank those who are with us today for their sympathy and attention. I do this, not in the name of a handful of dust, dear and reverend as it is, that now rests in Mount Auburn, but in the name of a great heart, which is with us today and which will still abide with those who work in its spirit.'

"Memorable indeed were the words of all these speakers. Yet perhaps the strongest impression of the day was borne away from the contributions of those whose lives had been liberated by the work of Dr. Howe. It fell to Dr. Hale to read a letter he had received that morning from Helen Keller. For many besides herself she said: 'When we compare the needs and helplessness of the blind before Dr. Howe began his work with their present usefulness and independence we realize that great things have been done in our midst. What if physical conditions have built up high walls about us? Thanks to our friend and helper, our world lies upward: the length and breadth and sweep of the heavens are ours!' From Miss Emilie Poulsson, speaking for the graduate associations of the Perkins Institution, came a thoughtful recognition of Dr. Howe's pioneer work. Her theme, 'The Education of the Blind,' had its immediate illustration in the part the pupils of the Institution themselves took in the varied programme. At the beginning of the exercises a band made up of these pupils played, most creditably, a selection from 'Faust.' At the end a blind musician, Mr. Charles Addison Jackson, displayed a control of the organ, in playing a composition

of Guilmant's, which many a seeing organist might have envied. Earlier in the programme came an exhibition, astonishing to the uninitiated, of reading from raised letters Whittier's poem *The Hero*, in which Dr. Howe first received his merited title, 'The Cadmus of the blind.' Besides this was the singing of Longfellow's 'Psalm of Life' by a chorus of treble voices. The household words,

> "'Let us, then, be up and doing,
> With a heart for any fate;
> Still achieving, still pursuing,
> Learn to labor and to wait,'

seemed to take on a new significance, pathetic and inspiring, as the lines fell from the singing lips of this brave company of the blind.

"To rehearse these items of the programme is enough. They carry their meaning with them. It is no wonder that the celebration prompted the graduates of the institution to plan at once for an annual Day of Remembrance, that the life and character of Dr. Howe may never be allowed to fade out of knowledge for those who owe their freedom to his labors. The centenary was celebrated not in Boston only, but in institutions founded on the work of Dr. Howe in many widely separated parts of the country. Wherever his name shall be held in remembrance, it will be well to associate with it the words spoken by Senator Hoar at the opening of the Boston meeting: —

"'His is one of the great figures in American history. I do not think of another who combines the character of a great reformer, of a great moral champion, of a great administrator of great enterprises, requiring business sagacity and wisdom as well as courage, always in the

van, with the character also of the knight errant who crossed the sea, like the Red Cross Knight of old, to champion the cause of liberty in a distant nation. I can almost think of him as if he were clad in the very armor of Spenser's Knight, —

> " ' " And on his breast a bloody cross he wore,
> The dear remembrance of his dying Lord,
> For whose sweet sake that glorious badge he bore,
> And dead, as living ever, him adored."

" ' There was never on the soil of Massachusetts, fertile as that soil has been of patriots and of heroes and of lovers, a more patriotic, a more heroic, a more loving knight.' "

THE poets shall have the last word, as is their wont. If a man's name is remembered beyond his generation and that of his children's children, it is because the poets find his story worth preserving; they hold the final court of appeal in the tribunal of fame.

Whittier's "Hero" was published during Dr. Howe's lifetime. Dr. Holmes and Mr. Brooks recited their poems at the memorial service held at the Boston Music Hall, a few weeks after Dr. Howe's death, when Mr. Channing's hymn was sung.

THE HERO

"O for a knight like Bayard,
Without reproach or fear;
My light glove on his casque of steel,
My love-knot on his spear!

"O for the white plume floating
Sad Zutphen's field above, —
The lion heart in battle,
The woman's heart in love!

"O that man once more were manly,
Woman's pride, and not her scorn;
That once more the pale young mother
Dared to boast 'a man is born!'

"But, now life's slumberous current
No sun-bowed cascade wakes;
No tall, heroic manhood
The level dulness breaks.

"O for a knight like Bayard,
Without reproach or fear!
My light glove on his casque of steel,
My love-knot on his spear!"

Then I said, my own heart throbbing
To the time her proud pulse beat,
"Life hath its regal natures yet,—
True, tender, brave, and sweet!

"Smile not, fair unbeliever!
One man, at least, I know,
Who might wear the crest of Bayard
Or Sidney's plume of snow.

"Once, when over purple mountains
Died away the Grecian sun,
And the far Cyllenian ranges
Paled and darkened, one by one,—

"Fell the Turk, a bolt of thunder,
Cleaving all the quiet sky,
And against his sharp steel lightnings
Stood the Suliote but to die.

"Woe for the weak and halting!
The crescent blazed behind
A curving line of sabres,
Like fire before the wind!

"Last to fly, and first to rally,
Rode he of whom I speak,
When, groaning in his bridle-path,
Sank down a wounded Greek.

"With the rich Albanian costume
Wet with many a ghastly stain,
Gazing on earth and sky as one
Who might not gaze again!

"He looked forward to the mountains,
Back on foes that never spare,
Then flung him from his saddle,
And placed the stranger there.

"'Allah! hu!' Through flashing sabres,
Through a stormy hail of lead,
The good Thessalian charger
Up the slopes of olives sped.

"Hot spurred the turbaned riders;
He almost felt their breath,
Where a mountain stream rolled darkly down
Between the hills and death.

"One brave and manful struggle, —
He gained the solid land,
And the cover of the mountains,
And the carbines of his band!"

"It was very great and noble,"
Said the moist-eyed listener then,
"But one brave deed makes no hero;
Tell me what he since hath been!"

"Still a brave and generous manhood,
Still an honor without stain,
In the prison of the Kaiser,
By the barricades of Seine.

"But dream not helm and harness
The sign of valor true;
Peace hath higher tests of manhood
Than battle ever knew.

"Wouldst know him now? Behold him,
The Cadmus of the blind,
Giving the dumb lip language,
The idiot clay a mind.

"Walking his round of duty
Serenely day by day,
With the strong man's hand of labor
And childhood's heart of play.

"True as the knights of story,
Sir Lancelot and his peers,
Brave in his calm endurance
As they in tilt of spears.

"As waves in stillest waters,
As stars in noonday skies,
All that wakes to noble action
In his noon of calmness lies.

"Wherever outraged Nature
Asks word or action brave,
Wherever struggles labor,
Wherever groans a slave, —

"Wherever rise the peoples,
Wherever sinks a throne,
The throbbing heart of Freedom finds
An answer in his own.

"Knight of a better era,
Without reproach or fear!
Said I not well that Bayards
And Sidneys still are here?"

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

A MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

I

Leader of armies, Israel's God,
Thy soldier's fight is won!
Master, whose lowly path he trod,
Thy servant's work is done!

No voice is heard from Sinai's steep
Our wandering feet to guide;
From Horeb's rock no waters leap,
No Jordan's waves divide;

No prophet cleaves our western sky
On wheels of whirling fire;
No shepherds hear the song on high
Of heaven's angelic choir.

Yet here as to the patriarch's tent
God's angel comes a guest;
He comes on Heaven's high errand sent,
In earth's poor raiment dressed.

We see no halo round his brow
Till love its own recalls,
And like a leaf that quits the bough,
The mortal vesture falls.

In autumn's chill declining day,
Ere winter's killing frost,
The message came; so passed away
The friend our earth has lost.

Still, Father, in thy love we trust;
Forgive us if we mourn
The saddening hour that laid in dust
His robe of flesh outworn.

II

How long the wreck-strewn journey seems
To reach the far-off past
That woke his youth from peaceful dreams
With Freedom's trumpet-blast!

Along her classic hillsides rung
The Paynim's battle-cry,
And like a red-cross knight he sprung
For her to live or die.

No trustier service claimed the wreath
For Sparta's bravest son;
No truer soldier sleeps beneath
The mound of Marathon;

Yet not for him the warrior's grave
In front of angry foes;
To lift, to shield, to help, to save,
The holier task he chose.

He touched the eyelids of the blind,
And lo! the veil withdrawn,
As o'er the midnight of the mind
He led the light of dawn.

He asked not whence the fountains roll
No traveller's foot has found,
But mapped the desert of the soul
Untracked by sight or sound.

What prayers have reached the sapphire throne,
By silent fingers spelt,
For him who first through depths unknown
His doubtful pathway felt.

Who sought the slumbering sense that lay
 Close shut with bolt and bar,
And showed awakening thought the ray
 Of reason's morning star!

Where'er he moved, his shadowy form
 The sightless orbs would seek,
And smiles of welcome light and warm
 The lips that could not speak.

No labored line, no sculptor's art,
 Such hallowed memory needs;
His tablet is the human heart,
 His record loving deeds.

III

The rest that earth denied is thine, —
 Ah, is it rest? we ask,
Or, traced by knowledge more divine,
 Some larger, nobler task?

Had but those boundless fields of blue
 One darkened sphere like this;
But what has heaven for thee to do
 In realms of perfect bliss?

No cloud to lift, no mind to clear,
 No rugged path to smooth,
No struggling soul to help and cheer,
 No mortal grief to soothe!

Enough; is there a world of love,
 No more we ask to know;
The hand will guide thy ways above
 That shaped thy task below.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

TO S. G. H.

At evening, in an Alpine vale,
 I watched the mountain summits' white
Flame rosy red, then slowly pale
 Before the deepening shades of night

When, from the waning face of day,
 The last faint shadow of a flush
Behind the mountains died away,
 There fell a momentary hush.

Then suddenly a thrill of awe
 Rang through the silent vale — for lo!
That spectral mountain-chain I saw
 Lit with a preternatural glow;

As if, behind that wall of snow,
 The sunken sun were shining through,
And smiling to the world below
 One more last heavenly adieu!

Who that has seen those evening shows
 Their look and voice can e'er forget?
Can the pure world that then arose
 On the soul's vision ever set?

Though death's pale mountains hide the sun
 Of noble lives from mortal eyes,
Oh, deem not then *their* day is done!
 They sank in higher heavens to rise!

As through life's twilight vale we go,
 Time's pilgrims in this earthly land,
Transpierced by that undying glow,
 How bright those shadowy mountains stand!

The boundary-hills are they that rise
And, looking on our earthly night,
Veil and reveal to mortal eyes
The land of everlasting light.

Nay, guardian shades of mighty dead,
A cloud of witnesses for God
Are they that watch the road we tread
Which their ascending spirits trod.

A cloud of shining ones — a band
Arrayed in raiment white as snow,
Transfiguring all this evening land
With a prophetic morning-glow.

Such bright and blessed visions cheer
Our hearts, who here love's tribute pay;
Through memory's sunset clouds shine clear,
Red omens of a heavenly day!

Peace from the soul's bright track comes down
Like evening starlight on the vale;
We see the victor's starry crown,
And say, Farewell! Farewell and Hail!

We feel a void which none can fill
But He who filled that soul with light;
In Him we know it lives, and still
Shall work e'en here with kindling might.

"The spirit of the Lord" — so spake
His genius — "hath anointed me
With power the prison-doors to break,
And set the darkened captives free."

So speaks the record of a life
Whose breath was freedom, love, and truth;
That kept in manhood's toil and strife
The freshness and the fire of youth.

True follower of the Son of Man,
The Captain of Salvation, — he
Fought ever foremost in the van,
Battling for light and liberty.

But chiefly in the field, — how blest!
Where Genius works with Goodness, — where
Peace hath her victories, — with zest
Of tireless love, he labored there.

He gave — with what a keen delight! —
Eyes to the *fingers* of the blind,
To *feel* their way with inner light
Along the sunny hills of mind.

And as a pilgrim of the night,
Groping his darksome way forlorn,
Shows on his kindling cheeks the light
Reflected from the breaking morn, —

So, as along the raised highway
Their eager fingers hurried on,
How o'er each sightless face the ray
Of joy — an inner sunrise — shone!

Nay, was there one who seemed by fate
Cut off from converse with her kind,
Death's liberating hand to wait
In threefold walls — deaf, dumb, and blind, —

E'en there his patient love could find,
By the fine thread of touch, a way
To guide the groping, struggling mind
From its dark labyrinth into day.

All these now mourn for him, as they
That sorrow when a father dies;
A deeper shadow clouds *their* day,
A sun has vanished from their skies!

For now his eyes are sealed! — but when
They meet him in the home on high,
The shepherd and his flock shall then
See face to face and eye to eye.

CHARLES T. BROOKS.

HYMN

O'er the pall of a Hero the laurel should fall
'T is the love of a Father our voices recall;
With hope, like the sunshine, it paints the dark air;
O God, with thy mercy, interpret our prayer!

From isles of the Muse, over Hellas' blue wave,
From homes of the North, for the hearts of the slave,
Let swift-flashing memory his requiem be, —
Unfaltering, unfettered, unselfish as he.

Our fond hearts re-echo his cry for the race,
For himself not a wish, — speed, speed to the place
Where anguish lies wailing, there always his home, —
O God, with thy mercy, illumine his tomb.

Unseal the veiled orb, for his eye, that ne'er slept,
Unfetter the mind from the darkness he wept;
The light of the soul is the star of life's sea, —
As loving, as hoping, as constant was He.

WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

APPENDIX

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE ingenious methods by which the blind deaf-mute Laura Bridgman was educated by Dr. Howe of the Perkins Institute, Boston, now presided over by Dr. M. Anagnos, his son-in-law, still remain one of the great monuments of pedagogic skill and devotion. His studies of his pupil during the most interesting period of her education were published in occasional Reports, which were at once translated into several European languages, and which — though they are now mostly out of print, and, strangely enough, have never been printed in connected form [1] — rank among the most valuable pedagogic literature. He designed that no stage in the strange and rapid process of her mental development should pass unrecorded. An accomplished lady teacher was engaged for years expressly for her, who, in her own book, has added materially to the information contained in Dr. Howe's Reports, and Laura was herself taught to keep a diary for about ten years, which has not been utilized by either Dr. Howe or by Mrs. Lamson. The large body of manuscript, . . . all written with pencil, and now often faded and indistinct, was committed some years ago to the keeping of the undersigned by a member of Dr. Howe's family. It was at one time the writer's intention to examine these papers and to edit Dr. Howe's Reports in one volume, the introductory chapter of which was finally published ["Aspects of German Culture," pp. 236–76] without scrutiny of Laura's papers. This was at length undertaken by Mr. E. C. Sanford, who is Graduate Student of Psychology in this University, and has been accomplished with such care, and has yielded results of such interest and value as to justify the present form of republication.

G. STANLEY HALL.

Johns Hopkins University, Jan. 22, 1887.

[1] They have since been reprinted in the 58th Report of the Perkins Institution, for 1889.

THE WRITINGS OF LAURA BRIDGMAN[1]

By PROF. E. C. SANFORD

LAURA BRIDGMAN'S name is a household word; forty years ago her education was followed with the most eager and general interest, and her case has become a classic in psychological literature. . . .

Considering her difficulties, Laura Bridgman's attainments are phenomenal, but in her studying she has always had that most efficient of all allies, a burning desire to learn. It has been said that in all her learning she probably never exceeded the tendency to spontaneous activity. . . .

They [the autobiographies] deal exclusively with the interesting early portion of her life, for the most part with that before she came to Boston; and though they offer no new historical matter of any consequence, they have the peculiar interest of autobiography in a marked degree. In a most naïve way they open to the reader her early home life, and throw light by their style of thought upon the peculiarities of her maturer mind. . . .

Laura's first lessons at the Institute are a centre of almost romantic interest to the student of her history. Here for the first time was the attempt made to reach and systematically to instruct one so bereft. The spirit of

[1] Reprinted by kind permission of Professor Sanford, and of the Overland Monthly Publishing Company, San Francisco. Owing to lack of space, only a small part of this interesting article is here given.

the parties to the experiment was so rare — warm-hearted and scientifically guided benevolence on one side, and real knowledge-hunger on the other — the matter at stake was so momentous — no less than a mind's life or death — and the final result was so much what had been desired and worked for, that the whole incident seems less an actual fact than the fancy of a story-teller. In these first lessons the great success was won, the Archimedean fulcrum gained, which made the world of after difficulties relatively light.

"The Dr. devised a way of having some words printed on bits of paper, which he glued on a mug and spoon, knife, fork, etc., for me to begin to feel on a single word by my finger. I could not know how to spell one letter with my own fingers for some time. Dr. H. was my first instructor. Miss Drew was my first instruct[r]ess in her ladyship. I loved them so dearly for a great many excellent reasons. It would lengthen my time very much indeed to describe all the reasons in this first book, but I can only write a little of them down. Dr. and Miss Drew set me a most excellent example. I felt so very glad to receive education from them. I enjoyed my new lesson much more than I can say. I never felt weary of studying, as it was very difficult for me to understand such simple and short words. [On the principle of "Let courage rise with danger."] Dr. made some signs that brought me up to understanding naturally. he boxed [patted] my head meaning 'right'; he knocked at my elbow for 'wrong.' He checked at me by his finger for 'shame' or 'folly' and when he was displeased in seeing anything which I had done wrong. He stroked my hand when when he perceived how dirty or shabby I looked; he patted my cheeks expressing me his love and affection." . . .

A word upon Laura Bridgman's "poems" is sufficient. She can, of course, know nothing of audible rhythm, and as little of audible rhyme, but a kind of visible rhyme would be possible to her; indeed, the following sentence from one of her letters, though possibly not of her own composition, seems to show that she had noticed the similar arrangement of letters in similarly placed words: "Pray ye the Lord; praise ye the Lord; prize ye the Lord." But such resemblance of words, except when, as above, they mark like parts of speech in like position in their clauses, would be a senseless artificiality to her. Of rhyme, as emphasizing and marking metre, she can have no conception. But, on the other hand, the rhythm of thought and the parallel structure of the psalms and the chants of the Hebrew prophets, are things perfectly comprehensible to one in her condition. Laura had read Scripture, and when she came to desire to express similar emotion (two of her three pieces are religious), it is natural that her thought should flow in channels already worn.

"Oct. 6th, 1867. — I will compose a poem for my blessed Sister Julia.

"God is love. his love is like sun. love is unquenchable.
Love of the Lord is everlasting.
It is hard to appreciate his love.
The sun manifests love of God.
Jesus Christ is our love.
Jesus died loving us on earth.
No man can expire [= express] love of God.
Are we saved by thy love?
Love is much brighter than light below the skies.
Let your heart rest in the love of the almighty Lord.
Love is the spirit of God, love blazes more than fire.
A heart is the candlestick and is lighted by love of Jesus.
Let not thy love dim. admit friends with out inviting them.

Yield the beam of sun to those around thee.
A candle cannot be overblown which is hid in the midst of the pure heart.
Ye shall not die if ye dwell in the love of the Lord."

.

The one on "Light and Darkness" is the best of the three.

"Light represents day.
Light is more brilliant than ruby, even diamond.
Light is whiter than snow.
Darkness is night like.
It looks as black as iron.
Darkness is a sorrow.
Joy is a thrilling rapture.
Light yields a shooting joy through the human [heart].
Light is sweet as honey, but
Darkness is bitter as salt and even vinegar.
Light is finer than gold and even finest gold.
Joy is a real light.
Joy is a blazing flame.
Darkness is frosty.
A good sleep is a white curtain.
A bad sleep is a black curtain:"

The figures of speech in these compositions should be noticed. In the first place, they are so numerous that the few lines above contain more than are consciously used in the whole of her autobiography. Then it is interesting to see to what senses they appeal. More than half of them are addressed to sight, but require little clearer seeing than is needed to distinguish light and darkness, or to perceive the sudden blazing up of a flame; in a word, scarcely more power of sight than Laura in her early years possessed. The reference to the sweetness of honey may have been suggested by her models, while that to the

bitterness of salt and vinegar would argue obtuseness of taste for what is really bitter, were it not possible that bitter is used with some confusion as to its signification. The appeal to the temperature sense is unmistakable, as also that in the seventh and eighth lines above to the sensation accompanying sudden action of the heart. With Laura's emotional temperament, these sensations were frequently experienced and are frequently referred to. The figure in the last couplet seems to refer to the general feeling of well-being, or its opposite, which results from a restful or a broken sleep, and so may be fairly said to be based on somatic sensation, a thing not often done in literature. To the writer the figure seems a peculiarly appropriate one, but these body sensations are so often below the reach, not only of conscious language, but of consciousness itself, that others may find in it no aptness at all. There are no figures of speech in any of the three pieces that appeal to the sense of smell or that of hearing. The first is not much to be wondered at, for such figures are rare in normal language; but that there should be none of the second is more remarkable. Indeed, her whole use of figures in these compositions is in strange accord with what is otherwise known of the condition of her senses before her coming to Boston. . . .

In considering her use of language, some of her simpler mistakes will first be noticed, and afterward such usages as bear more directly upon the mental state.

It should be observed by way of preface that, in her girlhood at least, Laura was more liable to errors in writing than in conversation.[1] . . .

As was said above, three kinds of errors may be expected in the form of her writings as opposed to their substance: first, mere graphical errors, such as every one

[1] See pages 131–132.

makes;[1] second, errors of misinformation arising from her misunderstanding of her teachers or from a too general application of the rules of language; and third, errors resulting from mental peculiarity, if any such exist. These will be briefly taken up in their order.

Graphical errors are not on the whole very numerous. One as frequently found as any is the dropping of a letter; as "huner" and "huger" for "hunger." Sometimes a final letter is dropped by anticipation, as "bes things," for "best things," or the process is reversed, and by recollection of the final letter of the preceding word one or more are omitted from the following one, as "have en" for "have been" and "dearents" for "dear parents." She makes a few careless substitutions of letters; for example, "smope" for "smoke." In one respect, however, her *lapsus pennæ* seem to differ from those found in ordinary manuscript. The substitution of letters there seems at times influenced by the *sound* of the letters; in Laura's manuscript this is seldom or never the case. . . .

The causes that lead her into literal errors lead her into similar verbal ones. Occasionally in the journal a sentence is quite unintelligible, and at times, though not often, her inability to see betrays her into anacolutha in quite simple sentences. She proposes to write to her "very pleasant and thriving feelings which I am very eager to have you read some of my ideas." . . . In the same way it happens several times that she inserts a negative when the sense of her sentence obviously requires its omission, or omits one where it should be retained; for example: . . . "I hope that she will hurt my tiny,

[1] "Which are in no way surprising in the manuscript of one that could not revise what she had written, nor see the beginning of a sentence from the end." — Professor Sanford's pamphlet, page 8.

tender and fragile heart, when she feels vexed in her heart." For the same reason, probably, she wrote a few times sentences in which verbs that should be co-ordinate throughout, do not agree in tense, as: "they were gay and run in the fields much."

The errors of misinformation as found in her use of language, are of two kinds: errors of vocabulary — that is in the meaning and use of single words — and errors of syntax. . . .

The number of words that Laura could learn, either directly or indirectly, through her senses, was, on account of her loss of sight and hearing, greatly diminished, and the number that she was obliged to learn by definition was greatly increased. The process of definition itself was, at first, made more than ordinarily difficult by the smallness of her vocabulary. Words whose objects appealed to her sense of touch, she learned rapidly and used with few mistakes; but where the help of her senses was wanting she learned slowly and with difficulty, and made frequent mistakes.

But imperfect definition is not a hopeless bar to the understanding of new words. It is possible to supply its defects, in part at least, by observation of the use of words in the discourse of others. . . . Yet even this means of correcting her verbal aberrations was not possible to Laura in full measure. It is true that she was not wholly without opportunity for observation; she had prolonged manual conversations with her teachers and friends, and her own social disposition made her inclined to converse. Nevertheless, her opportunity was limited; she never could profit from the talk of third persons, for she could perceive only what was addressed to her directly; and besides, in spite of the rapidity with which she could receive and her special teachers could commu-

nicate, the rate for the average of all who talked with her must have been quite slow; so that even if she had spent as much time daily in the observation of language as other children do, she could not, other things being equal, have had their language experience.

Some help in this matter might have been expected from her books; but she had not many, and her reading, if we may judge by her success with the Scriptures, seems, even as late as 1847, when she was seventeen years old, to have been laborious, and her understanding of what she read somewhat uncertain.

The age at which she began to learn probably increased her difficulty. . . .

Examples to illustrate these errors of vocabulary are not hard to find. . . . By far the larger number of them are cases of what might be called false synonyms; that is, Laura replaces the normal word by one of similar but not identical meaning, without apparently knowing that she has altered the sense of her phrase; as, for example, when she says, "she searched her couch," for "she sought her couch;" . . . sometimes the grammatical setting of a word is such that the substitute not only does not fit, but the rejected synonym may be at once determined, as in the following case from the autobiography, where she says of Mr. Tenny's teaching, "he was very incapable of instructing me geography," in which the double object points to the insertion of "instructing," for the more familiar "teaching." In other cases the exact word cannot be so easily determined, though something of the same kind has taken place. . . .

Laura's syntactical errors are mostly errors of clause construction, but a few are of a simpler nature. . . .

Her use of the superlative degree of comparison is interesting. Usage allows the superlative form of ad-

jectives made with "most" to stand regularly for the intensive form made with "very," but much less frequently allows the form in "est," though examples are found. In most cases the use of the latter strikes the ear as strange and the mind as illogical. Laura, however, uses the "est" form and the other with almost equal freedom; for example, "like a sharpest needle." . . . It is to be noticed here, and may be laid down as a general principle for nearly all of Laura's syntactical peculiarities, that she simply extends legitimate idiom.

Laura's sentences are almost without exception short and simple, and errors of arrangement are not frequent. The only mistake of the kind worthy notice is that of separating the relative and its antecedents. . . .

In the matter of clause constructions, as in that of verbal forms, much allowance is to be made for Laura's having written without revision. . . . But some of her temporal clauses are a little better authenticated and offer interesting parallels to idioms foreign to English, but native to kindred tongues. The following examples suggest French and German constructions: [Nov., 1849] "I am . . . strong and well for a fortnight." [June, 1861] "I am visiting a friend, a Mrs. Glass, a month since." [March, 1873] "It is much milder weather for six days past." The extension of the intensive use of the superlative noticed above has parallels in classical usage. Laura's hitting upon the idioms of a foreign language is, however, not very surprising; the same thing is not uncommon, probably, in the language of normal children. . . .

Another syntactical peculiarity of Laura's is her use of the infinitive. In this she follows the general principle before laid down; that is, she merely extends what in a more restricted way is common and established idiom.

The following may stand as typical examples: [1845] "tremont street and park street and beacon street are filled with people to look out of the windows." . . . These seem to be related to the common infinitive of purpose, as: "A. came to dine." . . .

Turning now from the form to the meaning of Laura's language, it will be interesting to see, first, in what degree she had correct conceptions of the senses of which she was deprived. But too much in the way of evidence must not be expected from this source. People are common enough who use glibly the language of subjects of which they are ignorant. The frequency of color-blindness was unguessed till more searching tests than those of language were applied.

That she had some general notion, however, of the powers of sight will appear from the following quotations: [1849] "I think that he would admire to contemplate the country." [1869] "How do you like yourself in the West? do you like the view of the place?" . . . The following is her version of an account which had been read to her of the prospect from the top of Bunker Hill Monument; it would seem to indicate a little confusion as to the *modus operandi* of sight: [1845] "marco was very much pleased with a brightness of variety of view. it seemed to go down by houses and churches and fields and streets and orchards and charlestown and cities and bays and harbours. he could see very far off. they looked very small." Of many of the facts of sight she was of course ignorant. She thought the zinc sheets in some of the veranda windows of the Institute were transparent like the glass above them, and that because her teacher could see the windows in the houses in Boston, she could also look through them and see what was going on inside.

The words of sight which Laura uses show still further

the limitations of her notion of that sense. Such verbs as "see," "look," "gaze," "glance," "survey," are used, sometimes of herself, sometimes of others, which might imply that she conceived her method of perception to be not unlike that of seeing people. She uses such adjectives as "bright," "brilliant," "glorious," "splendid," but under circumstances which suggest that the first two were terms which she had learned from others as applying to the heavenly bodies and the like, and that she attached no meaning to the last two except a metaphorical one, in which they might characterize the weather or a fancy basket. It is suggestive that she uses few or none of the picturesque sight-words like "flash," "glitter," and "dazzle."

What were her conceptions of color, or if she had any, it is almost impossible to tell from any indications in her writings. She uses the words of color, to be sure, and in more than a hundred cases collected, in which she speaks of over twenty shades, she only makes one decided and certain error. That time she speaks of the "blue and pink roses." It is, however, a single case, and may very well be a mere slip in composition. On the other hand, it is certain that she uses words of color only where she might easily have heard them applied by others; so that her use of color language proves nothing either way. . . .

The testimony of her writings is in a degree conflicting, but this much at least seems clear; she knew that sight was a sense which perceived objects at a distance, perhaps that their apparent size diminished as their distance increased, and that the eyes must be turned in the direction of the objects to see them. She possibly thought sight was something like touch, and when seeing is reduced to the distinguishing of light and darkness,

it certainly has great likeness to the temperature section of that sense. When her friends did not seem to notice some new part of her clothing she placed their hands upon it, as was her custom in showing things to the blind. But to her mind this resemblance did not extend to a restriction of the range of vision. She seems to have had enough conception of light to understand the reason for day and night when the thing was illustrated by a ball hung before the fire. In short, and this is about all her writings show in the matter, though her conception of the sense was vague in its detail, she was not blind-minded.

For a conjecture as to her notion of the sense of hearing, there are even fewer data than for that of sight. In the stories which she wrote out from memory, she often had occasion to tell how one and another heard, and she uses the words correctly. But in the matter of her own composing, she speaks of hearing less freely than of seeing. She knew it, however, as a sense that her teachers and others possessed. She refers to their going to hear music; she knew that she must move silently, if she wished not to waken sleepers; she knew that others could be summoned by calling. Once being told of the great distance at which the roar of Niagara could be heard, she asked if it could be heard where she then was. But altogether there seems to be nothing to show that she had any idea of sound as sound, or of hearing as a sense. . . .

The office of the sense of hearing was in part performed by her extremely delicate perception of vibrations. To use her own expression she heard with her feet. . . .

The correlative of hearing is speech. In the ordinary sense of the word Laura had no vocal language, but she had in fact a large number of sounds by which she

designated persons of her acquaintance. They had to her mind a certain fitness in each case and served in a degree for proper names with appropriate adjectives. She had besides certain emotional sounds of the nature of interjections. All of these she unfailingly distinguished, but not as sounds; they stood to her as muscular adjustments and accompanying vibrations. She writes of laughing or crying *loud*, which only means with explosive breathing and forceful vibration in the throat. That she had any true idea of the letters as signs of sound seems improbable, at least, when the following journal entry was made: "I talked with my mouth *mother* and *father* and baby and abby." What she really pronounced was "ma" and "pa" or "mamma" and "papa."

The language of the other senses, taste, smell, touch, beside that of the internal sensations (heart-ache and the like), is used by Laura, but need not detain us further than to mention that touch, especially the temperature sense, fills a large place in it.

Another interesting question is whether or not Laura brought through her early sickness any recollection of the time before it. If by recollection is meant conscious and definite reproduction, it is quite certain that she recollected nothing; few normal people remember anything that happened before they were twenty-eight months old. . . .

The general features of Laura's mind have been sufficiently brought out by what has gone before, but it will be interesting perhaps, to follow particular powers further. Imagination, for example, was exhibited in a certain degree by some of Laura's plays, both before and after she went to the Institute. Her journals when she was about eighteen or twenty years old show a con-

siderable development of this faculty in a more conscious form. . . .

In a certain way she was even introspective. When quite little she used to say, "think is tired," when weary of study. Later she observed her mind more consciously. In 1849 she writes: "I had very numerous very pleasant and comical thoughts in my mind." . . .

Two general peculiarities of her mind ought to be noticed: the youthfulness of her thought, mentioned in connection with what was said of her style; and her matter-of-fact way of receiving what she was told. Her thought gives an impression of youthfulness partly because it is so much occupied with particulars as opposed to generalizations. A certain amount of this is not unnatural in journals, autobiographies, and personal letters, and alone would be of no great weight; but there is, besides, a lack, even in the latest productions that have come to my hands, of thought upon those subjects, except religion, that exercise mature minds. The age at which she came to the conscious power of imagination and introspection argues that her development was somewhat retarded, and the youthfulness of her style would add that she never reached full mental ripeness. How much of this was due directly to her state, and how much to the asylum life and her ignorance of the common emotional and other experiences of life which that necessitated, is hard to determine.

Her matter-of-fact attitude again shows a certain child-likeness of mind. She found figurative language difficult, as was mentioned above, because her tendency was to take it as literally true. A like incapacity was found in the celebrated Caspar Hauser, and is said to be somewhat characteristic of the blind, which would point to its cause in Laura's case.

To gather all the evidence of Laura's writings as to her mental constitution into a single sentence, it may be said that she was eccentric, not defective; she lacked certain data of thought, but not in a very marked way the power to use what data she had.

The history of Laura Bridgman abounds in pedagogical as well as psychological suggestiveness. Though her case may have been unproductive to philosophy, her present state remains an inspiration to teachers and a masterpiece of education. An education, it may be observed, of which the staple was language, not taught as grammar by inflections and syntax, nor yet as philology, but by a method near to that of nature, as the means of receiving and communicating thought.



NOTES



NOTES

Page 12. The causes of blindness.

"Blindness has been in all ages one of those instruments by which a mysterious Providence has chosen to afflict man." Dr. Howe's first Report, from which the above is quoted, was printed in 1833, when he was a little more than thirty years of age. It should be noted that before long he took a more scientific view of blindness. The parents of children applying for admission to the Institution were required to answer the questions contained in a printed blank, and from the data gathered in this and in other ways, Dr. Howe formed the opinion which is expressed in his Report for 1874 :

"The proportional number of these abnormals" (*i. e.*, the blind, the mutes, the imbecile, and the like) "to the sound will vary according as people live in observance of the natural laws of life, of intermarriage, of temperance and of regular periodicities, or continually violate them, through ignorance, or through incapacity for self-control.

"The human race is still in an early stage of its development. Defective and abnormal children have been born to every generation; to some more, to some less, according to local or climatic influences, but mainly according to the standard of intelligence and virtue in a given community. They must be expected through incalculable time, and many generations; but their production is, nevertheless, accidental, temporary, and not essential in the race."

Page 18. Printing for the Blind.

Although Dr. Howe here speaks (in 1834) of abandoning the idea of printing from plates, it should be said that he found it best to use the stereotyping process. By means of this and other improvements, he succeeded in cutting down the bulk of books printed in raised type, one half, and the expense of printing to

one quarter of what it had been. He was extremely desirous of giving the Bible to the blind, and in 1836 the entire New Testament was printed at the Perkins Institution.

We subjoin an extract from Dr. Howe's letter urging the co-operation of the American Bible Society.

BOSTON, MASS., March 1, 1835.

To the Secretary of the American Bible Society.

SIR, — About eighteen months ago, I had the pleasure of bringing before a meeting of clergymen, assembled at the Park St. Church, the subject of printing the Bible in raised letters, for the use of the blind. It was so well received, that a voluntary contribution was taken up upon the spot, and the proceeds paid over, as I am informed, to the general fund of your Society. Since that period, I have devoted much time to the subject of printing for the Blind.

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I am now ready to commence this work; the press and the types are prepared, hundreds of the Blind are waiting for it; but the means are wanting. I raised among the charitable inhabitants of Nantucket and New Bedford a little more than a thousand dollars, which has enabled me to purchase a press, the types, and all the requisites for printing, and to strike off one hundred copies of the Acts of the Apostles. But the money is now exhausted; the press, etc., is the property of the Institution, which I have the honor to superintend; but the Institution has not the funds necessary for printing the Gospel. I call therefore earnestly upon your Society in the name of the Blind for aid; I call through you upon the Christian community generally to assist in this work. The entire Gospel has never yet been printed for the Blind: the separate Evangelists which have been printed are clumsy and expensive; the whole New Testament can now be given them in about the same size, and for about the same price, as is charged for the book of Mark; or the book of John — the only ones ever printed in English.

There are in the United States more than six thousand Blind; of these, at least two thousand can be taught to read, and these may be supplied with the New Testament. They are now sitting in darkness, both physical and intellectual; shall nothing be done

to pour in upon their minds the light of the Gospel — shall a Christian community which is sending out the word of God to the heathen of every land, withhold it from their own brethren? Shall the American Bible Society, which is almost realizing the miracle of the tongues and speaking to all the men of all the earth "so that each hears it in his own tongue wherein he was born the wonderful works of God;" shall it be dumb to those who are under its very shadow? If any Christian should ask, why it is necessary to go to the expense of printing the Gospel for the Blind, since it can be read to them by others, I say in reply: "Put the case to yourself; are you willing to be deprived of your Bible — are you willing to have it from the lips of another — are you willing to lose the pleasure of retiring to your closet on the Sabbath, or when you are grieved in spirit, and holding direct communication with your Heavenly Father through his revealed word?" "Oh — no — never!" you will say; and if you then, who can read the power of God in the great book of nature, in the bright sun, and the azure lights of the firmament; whose eyes are gladdened by the sight of green fields, and golden harvests, and all the riches and beauteousness which light and color give to the objects around; if *you* need the Gospel to yourself alone, how much more does the poor blind man need it? he, for whom there is no sun — no day — no color — but to whom nature is ever shrouded in mournful black?

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But I am probably combating imaginary objections; no Christian, no humane man, can hesitate about the duty of giving the Gospel to the Blind, as soon as it can be satisfactorily shown, that it is feasible.

It is feasible — perfectly so, — the specimens which I send you, prove it irresistibly; — . . . We ask the means of putting the whole Gospel within the reach of every blind person, — who can read the English language, whether his home be on this or the other side of the Atlantic.

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I have the honor to be respectfully yours,

SAMUEL G. HOWE.

Director of the N. E. Institution for the Blind.

Page 45. The first step.

In the story of the education of Laura Bridgman, the strongest interest centres in the first steps by which she was taught the existence and use of language. The best accounts of her early lessons are contained in Dr. Howe's contemporaneous Reports, especially that of 1837, published when she had been a few months under instruction, and that of 1840. His Reports on the education of his famous pupil were reprinted in the 58th Report of the Perkins Institution, for the year 1889. His account of her published in Barnard's American Journal of Education for December, 1857 — since reprinted — is full of interest. Laura's autobiography, written in 1854, also tells of her early lessons (see Appendix, page 352). Mrs. Lamson's Life of Laura Bridgman contains an undated account furnished by Mrs. Morton (Miss Drew), Dr. Howe's first assistant in this task. It was apparently written between 1876 (the year of Dr. Howe's death) and 1879, when the Life was published.

In his Report for 1874, the Doctor gives interesting reminiscences of these early days. This Report, which was practically his last, was written when his health had failed sadly, in the midst of much physical suffering, and at a distance from his books and papers. Hence he here makes the mistake of saying that instruction in the manual alphabet preceded the use of the labels with raised letters. This lapse of memory after nearly thirty-seven years is not surprising, especially when we remember that in teaching Oliver Caswell and other blind deaf-mutes Dr. Howe began with the manual alphabet (see page 89). In Mrs. Lamson's Life of Laura, she makes a mistake similar to that just noted, when she says that *she* gave Oliver Caswell his first lesson. The contemporary school journal (for 1841), kept by Mrs. Lamson (Miss Swift) herself, shows this to be an error.

Page 53. "To teach common children their letters in alphabetical order."

It should be noted that Laura Bridgman was taught the whole word before she learned the individual letters. Dr. Howe thus, in 1837, anticipated by ten years the use of the word method by Mrs. Horace Mann, the wife of his intimate friend and co-laborer,

and by her sister, Miss Elizabeth Peabody. These ladies were doubtless led to employ it by their knowledge of its successful use in the case of Laura Bridgman.

Page 60. How Laura learned language.

See also Dr. Howe's Report for 1839, Appendix B, page 21.

"No definite course of instruction can be marked out, for her inquisitiveness is so great, that she is very much disconcerted if any question which occurs to her is deferred until the lesson is over. It is deemed best to gratify her, if her inquiry has any bearing on the lesson; and often she leads her teacher far away from the objects he commenced with."

Pages 62 and 68.

A more detailed account of Dr. Howe's method of imparting a knowledge of qualities, is given below.

". . . It is often asked, how can a knowledge of qualities which have no positive existence be communicated? Just as easily, and just as they are taught to common children; when a child bites a *sweet* apple, or a *sour* one, he perceives the difference of taste; he hears you use one sound, *sweet*, when you taste the one; another sound, *sour*, when you taste the other. These sounds are associated in his mind with those qualities; the deaf child sees the pucker of your lips, or some grimace when you taste the sour one, and that grimace perhaps is seized upon by him for a sign or a name for *sour;* and so with other physical qualities. The deaf, dumb, and blind child cannot hear your sound, cannot see your grimace; yet he perceives the quality of sweetness, and if you take pains to make some peculiar sign two or three times when the quality is perceived, he will associate that sign with the quality, and have a name for it.

"It will be said that qualities have no existence, being mere abstractions, and that when we say *sweet apple*, the child will think it is a compound name for the individual apple; or, if he does not do this, that he cannot know whether by the word *sweet* we mean the quality of *sweetness* or the quality of *soundness*. This is true; at first the child does *not* know to what the sound *sweet* refers; he may misuse it often, but by imitation, by observation, he at last

gets it right, and applies the word "sweet" to every thing whose qualities revive the same sensation as the sweet apple did; he then uses the word *sweet* in the abstract, not as a parrot, but understandingly, simply because the parrot has not the mental organization which fits it to understand qualities, and the child has. Now the transition from physical to mental qualities is very easy; the child has dormant within his bosom every mental quality that the man has; every emotion and every passion has its natural language; and it is a law of nature that the exhibition of this natural language calls into activity the like mental quality in the beholder. The difference between joy and sorrow, between a smile and a frown, is just as cognizable by a child as the difference between a sweet apple and a sour one; and through the same mental process, by which a mute attaches signs to the physical quality, he may (with a little more pains) be made to attach them to the moral qualities." (From 11th Report of the Perkins Institution. Appendix A, for the year 1842.)

Page 70.

We subjoin another extract from the 11th Report of the Perkins Institution, Appendix A, showing Dr. Howe's views as to the teaching of verbs.

"Much surprise has been expressed by some who are conversant with the difficulties of the teaching, etc., of mutes, that Laura should have attained the use of verbs without more special instruction. It may be said, in reply, that no minute and perfect account of the various steps in the process of her instruction has ever yet been published; and that, moreover, the difficulties in the use of the verbs are in reality much less than is usually supposed.

"As soon as a child has learned the use of a noun, as *apple*, and of one or two signs of qualities, as *sour* and *sweet*, he begins to use them; he holds up the fruit, and lisps out, *apple — sour*, or *apple — sweet;* he has not been taught a verb, and yet he uses one; he asserts the one apple to be sweet, the other to be sour; he in reality says, mentally, 'apple *is sweet apple*,' or 'apple *is sour apple;*' and in a little while he catches by the ear, an audible sign, — the word *is*, and puts it in where he before used only a sign, or meant to use one. Just so with the deaf-mute; when he has learned a

noun and an adjective he uses them by the help of a verb, or some mark of assertion; and you have only to give him some sign, which he will adopt just as readily as the speaking child, by mere imitation, and without any process of ratiocination. We give too narrow a definition when we say a verb is a *word*, etc. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that the long, detailed, and very ingenious process laid down in some books for teaching verbs and other parts of speech to the deaf-mutes, are worse than useless."

Page 98. The desirability of teaching Laura to speak.

Dr. Howe changed his mind on this subject, and wrote in his Report for 1874: "She has attained such facility for talking in the manual alphabet, that I regret that I did not try also to teach her to speak by the vocal organs, or regular speech. The few words which she has learned to pronounce audibly prove that she could have learned more."

Page 98.

Dr. Howe thus combats the theory that deaf-mutes should be educated by natural signs : —

"Now, as, to oblige a common child to learn French, I would place him in circumstances where he would be required to use it continually, so I would place the dumb child in such circumstances that he would be obliged to use the finger alphabet, writing and reading, until the language should become to him *vernacular ;* — until the thought of a *horse* for instance, should instantly be associated in his mind, not with the motion of his two forefingers imitating the ears of the animal, but with the word *horse*."

Tenth Annual Report of Perkins Institution, Appendix A.

Page 98. Teaching deaf-mutes to speak.

Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, in her Memoir of her husband (see 45th Report of Perkins Institution for 1876) says: "On his return to America [in 1844], Dr. Howe warmly seconded Mr. Mann's efforts for the introduction of the teaching of articulate speech as a part of deaf-mute education. . . . In the interim (one of many years) between his first efforts to this end and their final success, Dr. Howe was instrumental in leading many mothers of deaf-mute children to conduct their education upon this principle."

Page 115. Knowledge of God.

The following extract is from Dr. Howe's Report for 1844: "The words 'knowledge of God' may also be understood in different ways. If a child ascertains that tables and chairs and carpets, houses, ships and machinery, carriages, tools, watches, and a thousand other things, are made by men, and then infers that the sun, moon and stars, the hills, rivers and rocks, must have been created, but could not have been made by man, — that child has an idea of the existence of God; and when you teach him the three letters, G — O — D, you do not make to him a revelation of God's existence, you only give to him a name for a power the existence of which he had already conceived in his own mind. We teachers are apt to overrate our own efforts; let us attempt to convey a knowledge of abstract truth to parrots and monkeys, and then we shall know how much is done by children and how little by ourselves. It is in this sense that I mean to be understood, when I say that Laura Bridgman, of herself, arrived at the conception of the existence of God."

Page 133. Accuracy of thought and language.

Dr. Howe's Report for 1849 contains an interesting dissertation on this subject, from which we give a brief extract.

"Precepts given before they can be comprehended are apt to degenerate into lifeless and unmeaning dogmas; and it was partly to prevent their doing so that I deferred so long this part of her instruction. It would be absurd, of course, to push the doctrine to its extreme, and never impart an idea beyond the full comprehension of a child; but it is not absurd to keep the doctrine in view.

"She was early taught that words must come to her as things bringing some meaning; if they do not show it at once, she challenges them, and bids them answer. She will not go over the first chapter of a book without stopping you at every verse. . . . Children must, of course, rest satisfied at first with that part of the meaning of words which denotes the particular object of their thought; but they should be taught early to distinguish the attributes connoted by the word; that is, learn what qualities or conditions in the object are implied by its name.

The omission of this exercise in the training of children is common, and it is fatal in most cases to all hopes of attaining precision and accuracy of language, because persons rarely learn to correct the fault afterward; and its consequences are felt by them in various ways, and often result in great mischief to individuals and to society."

Page 149. Religious instruction.

We give below, the conclusion of a letter dated March 24th, 1844.

"I would like to live with you and your wife in a new house, because I love you the best. All folks are very well and happy. I want you to answer my last letter to you about God and Heaven, and souls and many questions.

"My dear friend good bye.

"LAURA BRIDGMAN."

Dr. Howe, who was in Europe at this time, replied as follows:

MY DEAR LITTLE LAURA; — Mrs. Howe has a sweet little baby; it is a little girl. We shall call her Julia. She is very smooth, and soft, and nice; she does not cry much, and we love her very, very much. You love her too, I think, do you not? But you never felt of her, and she never kissed you, and how can you love her? It is not your hands, nor your body, nor your head, which loves her and loves me, but your soul. If your hand were to be cut off, you would love me the same; so it is not the body which loves. Nobody knows what the soul is, but we know that it is not the body, and cannot be hurt like the body; and when the body dies the soul cannot die. You ask me in your letter a great many things about the soul, and about God; but, my dear little girl, it would take very much time and very many sheets of paper to tell you all I think about it, and I am very busy with taking care of my dear wife; but I shall try to tell you a little, and you must wait until I come home, in June, and we will talk very much about all these things. You have been angry a few times, and you have known others to be angry, and you know what I mean by anger; you love me and many friends, and you know what I mean by love. When I say there is a

spirit of love in the world, I mean that good people love each other; but you cannot feel the spirit of love with your fingers, it has no shape nor body; it is not in one place more than another, yet wherever there are good people there is a spirit of love. God is a spirit; the spirit of love. If you go into a house, and the children tell you that their father whips them, and will not feel them; if the house is cold and dirty, and everybody is sad and frightened, because the father is bad, and angry, and cruel, you will know that the father has no spirit of love. You never felt of him, you never had him strike you, you do not know what man he is, and yet you know that he has not the spirit of love, — that is, he is not a good, kind father. If you go into another house, and the children are all warm, and well fed, and well taught, and are very happy, and everybody tells you that the father did all this, and made them happy, then you know he has the spirit of love. You never saw him, and yet you know certainly that he is good; and you may say that the spirit of love reigns in that house. Now, my dear child, I go all about in this great world, and I see it filled with beautiful things; and there are a great many millions of people, and there is food for them, and fire for them, and clothes for them, and they can be happy if they have a mind to be, and if they will love each other. All this world, and all these people, and all the animals, and all things, were made by God. He is not a man, nor like a man; I cannot see Him nor feel Him, any more than you saw and felt the good father of that family; but I know that He has the spirit of love, because He, too, provided everything to make all the people happy. God wants everybody to be happy all the time, — every day, Sundays and all, and to love one another; and if they love one another they will be happy; and when their bodies die, their souls will live on and be happy, and then they will know more about God.

The good father of the family I spoke to you about, let his children do as they wished to do, because he loved to have them free; but he let them know that he wished them to love each other, and to do good; and if they obeyed his will they were happy; but if they did not love each other, or if they did any wrong, they were unhappy; and if one child did wrong it made

the others unhappy too. So in the great world. God left men, and women, and children, to do as they wish, and let them know if they love one another, and do good, they will be happy; but if they do wrong they will be unhappy, and make others unhappy likewise.

I will try to tell you why people have pain sometimes, and are sick and die; but I cannot take so much time and paper now. But you must be sure that God loves you, and loves everybody, and wants you and everybody to be happy; and if you love everybody, and do them all the good you can, and try to make them happy, you will be very happy yourself, and will be much happier after your body dies than you are now.

Dear little Laura, I love you very much. I want you to be happy and good. I want you to know many things; but you must be patient, and learn easy things first, and hard ones afterwards. When you were a little baby you could not walk, and you learned first to creep on your hands and knees, and then to walk a little, and by and by you grew strong, and walked much. It would be wrong for a little child to want to walk very far before it was strong. Your mind is young and weak, and cannot understand hard things; but by and by it will be stronger, and you will be able to understand hard things; and I and my wife will help Miss Swift to show you all about things that now you do not know. Be patient, then, dear Laura; be obedient to your teacher, and to those older than you; love everybody, and do not be afraid.

Good-bye. I shall come soon, and we will talk and be happy.

Your true friend,

DOCTOR.

Page 182. "Palestine place."

Dr. Howe suggests that by *place* Laura meant *country*. This is therefore one of the cases where her use of an imperfect synonym makes her knowledge appear less than it really was.

DR. HOWE'S EFFORTS IN BEHALF OF OTHER BLIND DEAF-MUTES, AND THE RESULTS AT THE PRESENT DAY.

In addition to the five blind deaf-mutes whom Dr. Howe had under instruction at the Perkins Institution, he mentions in his Reports a number of others whom he had seen or heard of, in America and in Europe. In his Report for 1844 he says that he has met ten of these unfortunate beings. It may easily be imagined how earnestly he endeavored to bring them under instruction, and to interest others in them. Thus Margaret Sullivan, whom he visited at the alms-house at Rotherhithe, in the outskirts of London, he commended to the rector of the parish, the Rev. Mr. Blick, who took up the case with earnestness and zeal. Dr. Howe himself gave the girl (who appeared about twenty-three years of age) some half-dozen lessons, beginning with the manual alphabet. "*She made more progress in two hours than Laura Bridgman did in two weeks.*" While making allowance for his own improvement as a teacher, Dr. Howe still thought that Margaret's natural intelligence and aptitude to learn were greater than Laura's.

Having had his attention called by Dr. Fowler to Miss Gill, a woman about forty-three years of age, living at Gosport, England, he made a careful examination of her case, and wrote a long and minute account of it to his professional confrère, closing with this appeal for help. He found this poor creature "but little more under human influences than your noble dog," yet neither idiotic nor with any constitutional incapacity for mental development.

"And here the question will recur to you, (for I doubt not it has occurred a dozen times already), can nothing be done to disinter this human soul? It is late, but perhaps not too late. *The whole neighborhood would rush to save this woman if she were buried alive by the caving in of a pit, and labor with zeal until she were dug out. Now if there were one who had as much patience as zeal, and who, having carefully observed how a little child learns language, would attempt to lead her gently through the same course, he might*

possibly awaken her to a consciousness of her immortal nature.[1] The chance is small indeed; but with a smaller chance they would have dug desperately for her in the pit; and is the life of the soul of less import than that of the body? . . .

Very faithfully yours,

S. G. Howe.

The Report for 1844 contains, in addition to the above, an account of three other deaf, dumb, and blind persons whom Dr. Howe had visited in Belgium, Ireland, and New York. It closes with this appeal: "It is to be feared that there are many others, whose cases are not known out of their own families, who are regarded as beyond the reach of help, and who are therefore left in their awful desolation.

"This ought not to be, either for the good of the sufferers, or of those about them. . . .

"*The sight of any being, in human shape, left to brutish ignorance, is always demoralizing to the beholders. There floats not upon the stream of life any wreck of humanity so utterly shattered and crippled that its signals of distress should not challenge attention and command assistance.*"[1]

At the Howe Centenary Miss Emily Poulsson, representing the graduates' association of the Perkins Institution, said in part: "The story of Laura Bridgman's deliverance, familiar the world over, needs only to be touched upon here. The blessed miracle, as it seemed then of reaching a soul shut away from all sound, all sight, all speech, is being performed for many a deaf-mute at the Perkins Institution and elsewhere to-day, and is no longer unique.

"Sore indeed was the need — a human soul imprisoned; long, patient, and costly was the labor of relief; but it was accomplished, for the first time known in history, by Dr. Howe. He was explorer and discoverer in the education of blind deaf-mutes, and his successful experience has been the light and guide in all the later endeavors."

The Kindergarten for the Blind at Jamaica Plain, founded by Mr. Anagnos with the assistance of his wife, serves as a preparatory school for the Perkins Institution. The schools at Jamaica Plain

[1] The italics are the editor's.

and South Boston quietly and persistently realize the best educational theories for the blind and the deaf blind. Here Thomas Stringer, Edith Thomas, Elizabeth Robin, and other blind deaf-mutes have received and are receiving their education. In each case so far, Mr. Anagnos has found means to supply the special teacher on whom the education of the blind deaf-mute must depend. Thomas Stringer, who was received at the kindergarten literally a little animal, has spent most of his life there. During the last years he has been a regular member of one of the public schools in Roxbury, the Lowell Grammar School, from which he was graduated in June, 1903, having received his diploma with an assurance from the head master, that it had been as honestly earned as any ever given by the school.

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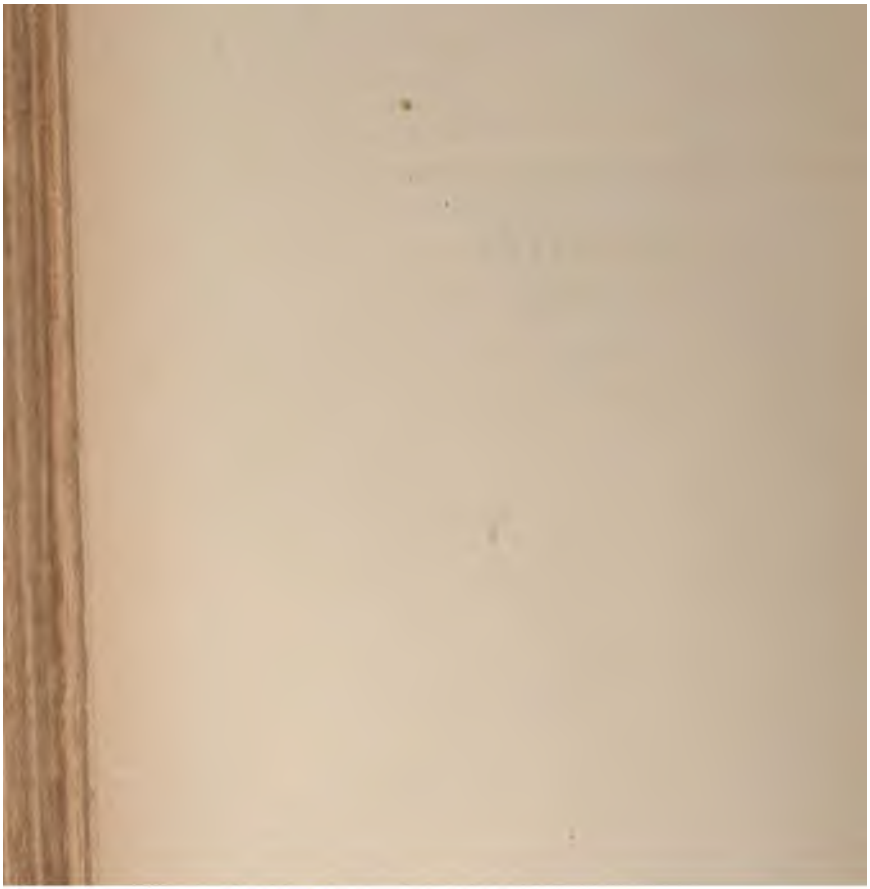
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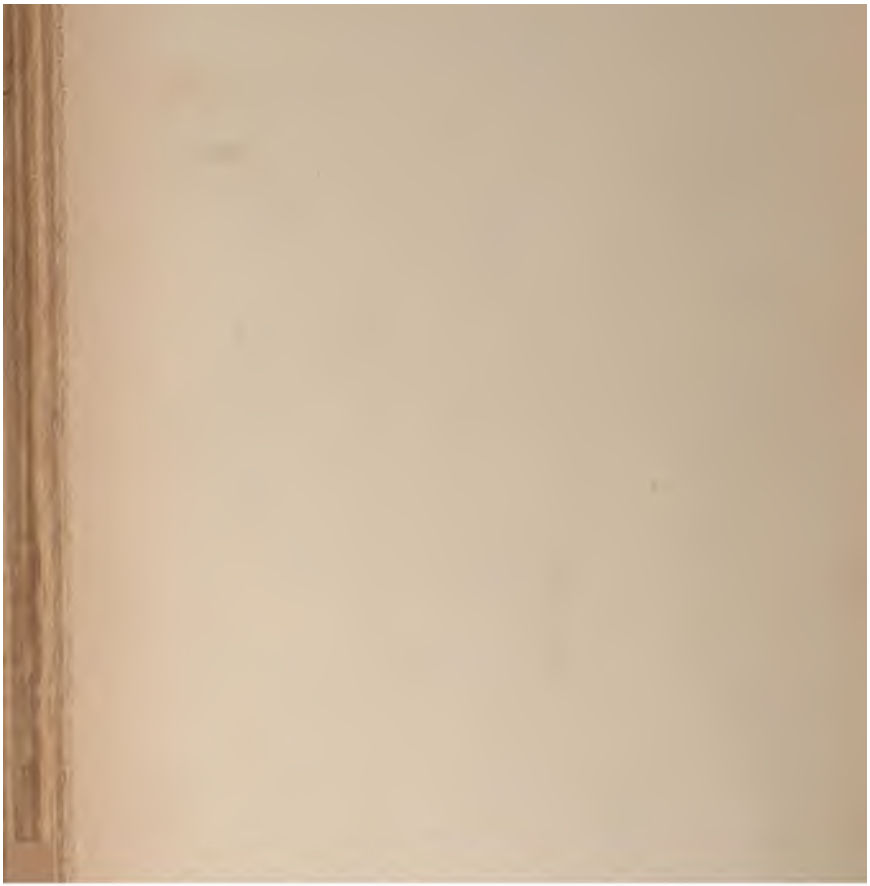
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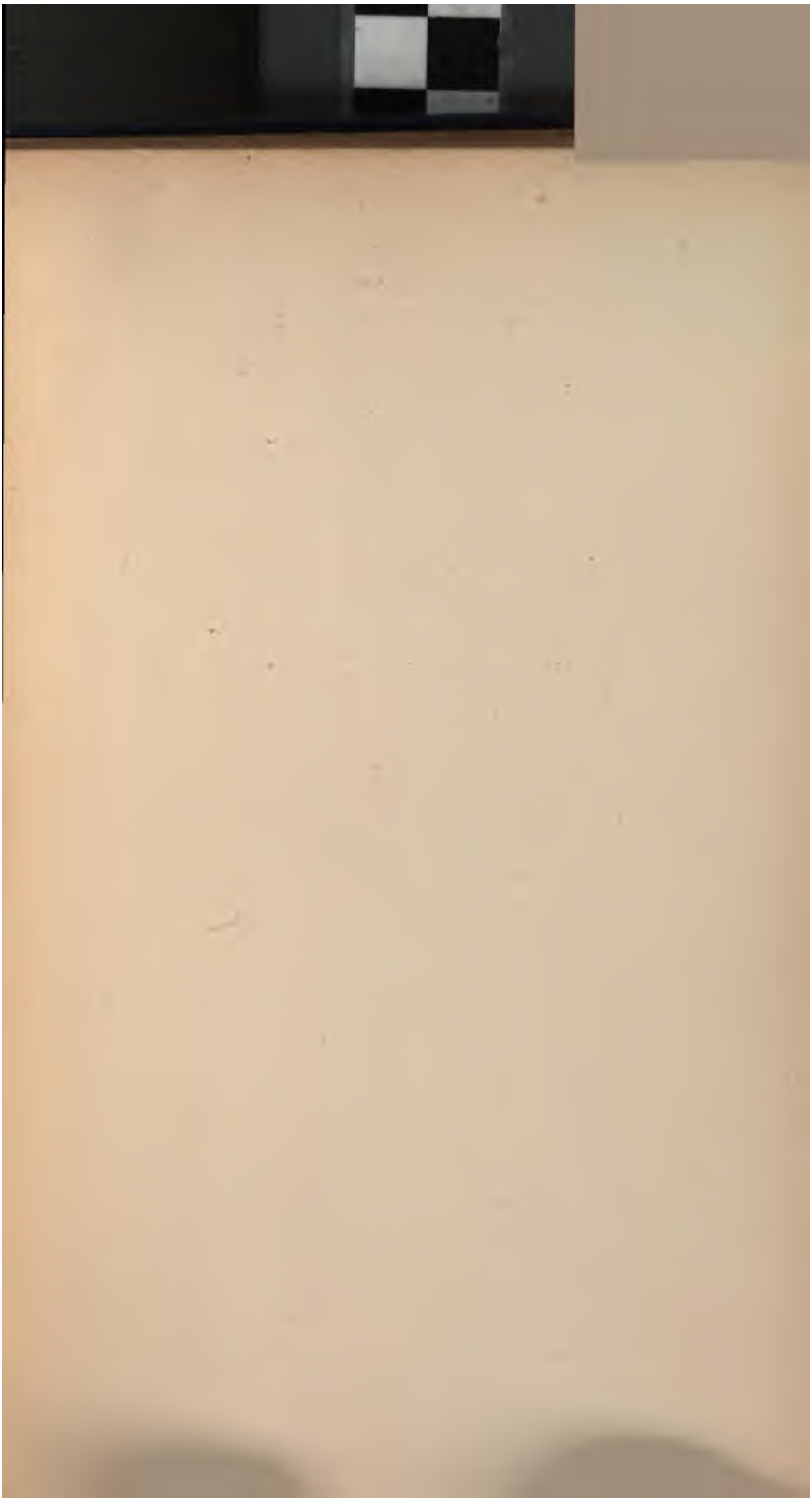
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